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SHORT STORIES

OF THE

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY OF LIFE

AFTER THE ORIGINAL DRAWING BY JULIEN DAMAZY.

"'Mercy!' the wretched man cried, raising his hands to her in supplication."

(See page 8.)

By

GUY De MAUPASSANT

Works

VOLUME IV

NEW YORK
DINGWALL-ROCK, LTD.
MCMXXV

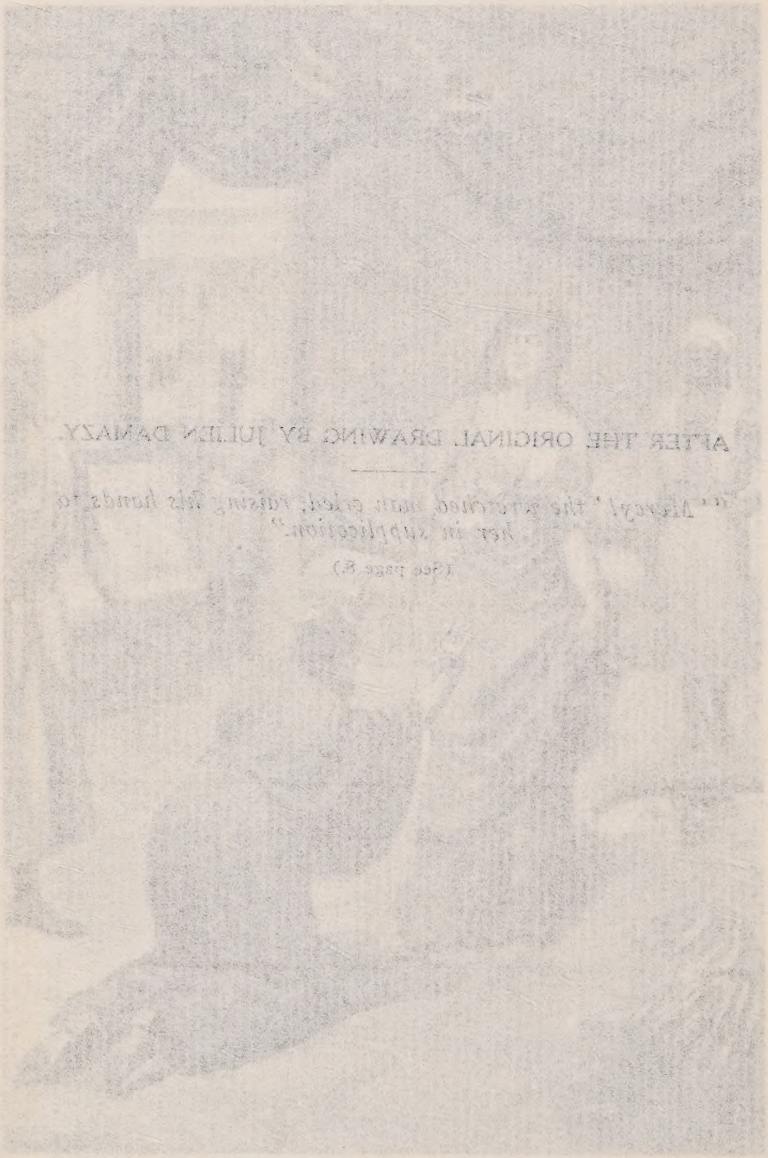

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TABLE OF CONTENTS*

		PAGE
1.	THE ODALISQUE OF SENICHOU	1
2.	IN THE MOONLIGHT	10
3.	BRIC-À-BRAC	17
4.	THE ARTIST'S WIFE	24
5.	IN THE SPRING	33
6.	THE REAL ONE AND THE OTHER	42
7.	A REPULSE	47
8.	THE CARTERS' WENCH	58
9.	RUST	64
10.	THE CARNIVAL OF LOVE	74
11.	THE RENDEZVOUS	84
12.	SOLITUDE	93
13.	THE MAN WITH THE BLUE EYES	100
14.	A GOOD MATCH	107
15.	AN ARTIFICE	115
16.	ALLOUMA	123
17.	THE OLD MAID	154
18.	THE SPECTER	167
19.	THE RELIC	176
20.	THE MARQUIS	183

*At the close of the last Volume will be found a complete list of the French Titles of De Maupassant's writings, with their English equivalents.

PAGE

21. A DEER PARK IN THE PROVINCES 192
22. AN ADVENTURE 197
23. THE BED 204
24. THE JENNET 209
25. UNDER THE YOKE 221
26. A FASHIONABLE WOMAN 228
27. WORDS OF LOVE 237
28. THE UPSTART 242
29. HAPPINESS 248
30. AN ADVENTURE IN PARIS 256
31. CHRISTMAS EVE 266
32. THE AWAKENING 272
33. THE WHITE LADY 280
34. MADAME BAPTISTE 287
35. WIFE AND MISTRESS 296

ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

"'MERCY,' CRIED THE WRETCHED MAN, RAISING HIS HANDS TO HER IN SUPPLICATION" . . *Frontispiece*

"'DARLING,' SHE CRIED, 'DO THANK THIS GENTLEMAN. HE HAS BEEN CHARMING TO ME'" . . 57

"'YOU MUST FIND OUT WHAT I SHOULD LIKE BEST, DO YOU HEAR?'" 177

"'WHAT DO YOU DO AT THIS TIME EVERY NIGHT?'" 263

THE ODALISQUE OF SENICHOU

In Senichou, which is a suburb of Prague, there lived about twenty years ago two poor but honest people, who earned their bread by the sweat of their brow. The man worked in a large printing establishment, and his wife employed her spare time as a laundress. Their pride and their only pleasure was their daughter Viteska, a vigorous, voluptuous, handsome girl of eighteen, whom they brought up very well and carefully. She worked as a dressmaker, and was thus able to help her parents a little. She made use of her leisure moments to improve her education, and especially her music, was a general favorite in the neighborhood on account of her quiet and modest demeanor, and was looked upon as a model by the whole suburb.

When she went to work in town, the tall girl, with her magnificent head—which resembled that of an ancient Amazon in its wealth of black hair—and

dark, sparkling yet liquid eyes, attracted the looks of passers-by, in spite of her shabby dress, much more than the graceful, well-dressed ladies of the aristocracy. Frequently some wealthy young lounger would follow her home; and even try to get into conversation with her, but she always managed to get rid of them and their importunities. She did not require any protector, for she was quite capable of protecting herself from any insults.

One evening, however, she met a man on the suspension bridge whose strange appearance drew from her a look which evinced some interest, but perhaps even more surprise. He was a tall, handsome man with bright eyes and a black beard, was very sunburned, and in his long coat — which was like a caftan — with a red fez on his head, he gave those who saw him the impression of an Oriental. He had noticed her look all the more as he himself had been struck by her poor, and at the same time regal, appearance. He remained standing and looking at her in such a way that he seemed to be devouring her with his eyes, and Viteska, who was usually so fearless, looked down. She hurried on and he followed her; the quicker she walked, the more rapidly he followed her, and, at last, when they were in a narrow, dark street in the suburb, he suddenly said in an insinuating voice:

"May I offer you my arm, my pretty girl?"

"You can see that I am old enough to look after myself," Viteska replied hastily; "I am much obliged to you, and must beg you not to follow me any more; I am known in this neighborhood, and it might damage my reputation."

"Oh! You are very much mistaken if you think you will get rid of me so easily," he replied. "I have just come from the East and am returning there soon. Come with me, and as I fancy that you are as sensible as you are beautiful, you will certainly make your fortune there. I will bet that before the end of a year, you will be covered with diamonds and be waited on by eunuchs and female slaves."

"I am a respectable girl, sir," she replied proudly, and tried to go on in front, but the stranger was immediately at her side again.

"You were born to rule," he whispered to her. "Believe me, and I understand the matter, that you will live to be a Sultaness, if you have any luck."

The girl did not give him any answer, but walked on.

"But, at any rate, listen to me," the tempter continued.

"I will not listen to anything; because I am poor, you think it will be easy for you to seduce me," Viteska exclaimed; "but I am as virtuous as I am poor, and I should despise any position which I had to buy with my shame."

They had reached the little house where her parents lived, and she ran in quickly, and slammed the door behind her.

When she went into the town the next morning, the stranger was waiting at the corner of the street where she lived, and bowed to her very respectfully.

"Allow me to speak a few words with you," he began. "I feel that I ought to beg your pardon for my behavior yesterday."

"Please let me go on my way quietly," the girl replied. "What will the neighbors think of me?"

"I did not know you," he went on, without paying any attention to her angry looks, "but your extraordinary beauty attracted me. Now that I know that you are as virtuous as you are charming, I wish very much to become better acquainted with you. Believe me, I have the most honorable intentions."

Unfortunately, the bold stranger had taken the girl's fancy, and she could not find it in her heart to refuse him.

"If you are really in earnest," she stammered in charming confusion, "do not follow me about in the public streets, but come to my parents' house like a man of honor, and state your intentions there."

"I will certainly do so, and immediately, if you like," the stranger replied, eagerly.

"No, no," Viteska said; "but come this evening if you like."

The stranger bowed and left her, and really called on her parents in the evening. He introduced himself as Ireneus Krisapolis, a merchant from Smyrna, spoke of his brilliant circumstances, and finally declared that he loved Viteska passionately.

"That is all very nice and right," the cautious father replied, "but what will it all lead to? Under no circumstances can I allow you to visit my daughter. Such a passion as yours often dies out as quickly as it arises, and a respectable girl is easily robbed of her virtue."

"And suppose I make up my mind to marry your daughter?" the stranger asked, after a moment's hesitation.

"Then I shall refer you to my child, for I shall never force Viteska to marry against her will," her father said.

The stranger seized the pretty girl's hand, and spoke in glowing terms of his love for her, of the luxury with which she would be surrounded in his house, of the wonders of the East, to which he hoped to take her, and at last Viteska consented to become his wife. Thereupon the stranger hurried on the arrangements for the wedding in a manner that made the most favorable impression on them all, and during the time before their marriage, he virtually lay at her feet like a humble slave.

As soon as they were married, the newly-married couple set off on their journey to Smyrna and promised to write as soon as they got there. But a month, then two and three, passed without the parents — whose anxiety increased every day — receiving a line from them, until at last the father in terror applied to the police.

The first thing was to write to the Consul at Smyrna for information: his reply was to the effect that no merchant of the name of Ireneus Krisapolis was known in Smyrna, and that he had never been there. The police, at the entreaties of the frantic parents, continued their investigations, but for a long time without any result. At last, however, they obtained a little light on the subject, but it was not all satisfactory. The police at Pesth said that a man whose personal appearance exactly agreed with the description of Viteska's husband had a short time before carried off two girls from the Hungarian capital to Turkey, evidently intending to trade in that coveted,

valuable commodity there, but that when he found that the authorities were on his track he had escaped from justice by sudden flight.

* * * * * * *

Four years after Viteska's mysterious disappearance, two persons, a man and a woman, met in a narrow street in Damascus, in a manner scarcely less strange than that in which the Greek merchant met Viteska on the suspension bridge in Prague. The man with the black beard, the red fez, and the long, green caftan, was no one else than Ireneus Krisapolis; matters appeared to be going well with him; he had his hands comfortably thrust into the red shawl which he had round his waist, and a negro was walking behind him with a large parasol, while another carried his *chibouque* after him. A noble Turkish lady met him in a litter borne by four slaves; she was wrapped like a ghost in a white veil, only that a pair of large, dark, threatening eyes flashed at the merchant.

He smiled, for he thought that he had found favor in the eyes of an Eastern houri, and that flattered him. But he soon lost sight of her in the crowd, and forgot her almost immediately. The next morning, however, a eunuch of the Pasha's came to him, to his no small astonishment, and told him to come with him. He took him to the Sultan's most powerful deputy, who ruled as an absolute despot in Damascus. They went through dark, narrow passages, and curtains were pushed aside, which rustled behind them again. At last they reached a large rotunda, the center of which was occupied by a beautiful fountain,

while scarlet divans ran all around it. Here the eunuch told the merchant to wait, and left him. He was puzzling his brains as to the meaning of it all, when suddenly a tall, commanding woman came into the apartment. Again a pair of large, threatening eyes looked at him through the veil, while he knew from her green, gold-embroidered caftan, that if it was not the Pasha's wife, it was at least one of his favorites who was before him. So he hurriedly knelt down, and crossing his hands on his breast, he put his head on to the ground before her. But a clear, diabolical laugh made him look up, and when the beautiful *odalisque* threw back her veil, he uttered a cry of terror, for his wife, his deceived wife, whom he had sold, was standing before him.

"Do you know me?" she asked with quiet dignity.

"Viteska!"

"Yes, that was my name when I was your wife," she replied quickly, in a contemptuous voice; "but now that I am the Pasha's wife, my name is Sarema. I do not suppose you ever expected to find me again, you wretch, when you sold me in Varna to an old Jewish profligate, who was only half alive. You see I have got into better hands, and I have made my fortune, as you said I should do. Well? What do you expect of me; what thanks, what reward?"

The wretched man was lying overwhelmed at the feet of the woman whom he had so shamefully deceived, and could not find a word to say. He felt that he was lost, and had not even got the courage to beg for mercy.

"You deserve death, you miscreant," Sarema continued. "You are in my hands, and I can do whatever I please with you, for the Pasha has left your punishment to me alone. I ought to have you impaled, and to feast my eyes on your death agonies. That would be the smallest compensation for all the years of degradation that I have been through, and which I owe to you."

"Mercy, Viteska! Mercy!" the wretched man cried, trembling all over, and raising his hands to her in supplication.

The *odalisque's* only reply was a laugh, in which rang all the cruelty of an insulted woman's deceived heart. It seemed to give her pleasure to see the man whom she had loved, and who had so shamefully trafficked in her beauty, in mortal agony, cringing before her, whining for his life, as he grovelled on his knees. At last she seemed to relent somewhat.

"I will give you your life, you miserable wretch," she said, "but you shall not go unpunished." So saying, she clapped her hands, and four black eunuchs came in. They seized the favorite's unfortunate husband and in a moment bound his hands and feet.

"I have altered my mind, and he shall not be put to death," Sarema said, with a smile that made the traitor's blood run cold in his veins. "But give him a hundred blows with the bastinado, and I will stand by and count them."

"For God's sake," the merchant screamed, "I can never endure it."

"We will see about that," the favorite said, coldly; "if you die under it, it was allotted you by fate; I am not going to retract my orders.'

She threw herself down on the cushions, and began to smoke a long pipe, which a female slave handed to her on her knees. At a sign from her the eunuchs tied the wretched man's feet to the pole, by which the soles of the culprit were raised, and began the terrible punishment. Already at the tenth blow the merchant began to roar like a wild animal, but the wife whom he had betrayed remained unmoved, carelessly blowing the blue wreaths of smoke into the air. Resting on her lovely arm, she watched his features, which were distorted by pain, with merciless enjoyment.

During the last blows he only groaned gently, and then he fainted.

* * * * * * *

A year later the dealer was caught with his female merchandise by the police in an Austrian town and handed over to justice, when he made a full confession. By that means the parents of the "Odalisque of Senichou" heard of their daughter's position. As they knew that she was happy and surrounded by luxury, they made no attempt to get her out of the Pasha's hands, who, like a thorough Mussulman, had become the slave of his slave.

The unfortunate husband was sent over to the frontier when he was released from prison. His shameful traffic, however, flourishes still, in spite of all the precautions of the police and of the consuls. Every year he provides the harems of the East with those voluptuous *Boxclanas,* especially from Bohemia and Hungary, who, in the eyes of a Mussulman, vie with the slender Circassian women for the prize of beauty.

IN THE MOONLIGHT

WELL-MERITED was the name, "soldier of God," by the Abbé Marignan. He was a tall, thin priest, fanatical to a degree, but just, and of an exalted soul. All his beliefs were fixed, with never a waver. He thought that he understood God thoroughly, that he penetrated His designs, His wishes, His intentions.

Striding up and down the garden walk of his little country parsonage, sometimes a question rose in his mind: "Why did God make that?" Then in his thoughts, putting himself in God's place, he searched obstinately, and nearly always was satisfied that he found the reason. He was not the man to murmur in transports of pious humility, "O Lord, thy ways are past finding out!" What he said was: "I am the servant of God; I ought to know the reason of what he does, or to divine it if I do not."

Everything in nature seemed to him created with an absolute and admirable logic. The "wherefore" and the "because" were always balanced. The dawns

were made to rejoice you on waking, the days to ripen the harvests, the rains to water them, the evenings to prepare for sleeping, and the nights dark for sleep.

The four seasons corresponded perfectly to all the needs of agriculture; and to him the suspicion could never have come that nature has no intention, and that all which lives has accustomed itself, on the contrary, to the hard conditions of different periods, of climates, and of matter.

But he hated women; he hated them unconsciously, and despised them by instinct. He often repeated the words of Christ, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" and he would add, "One would almost say that God himself was ill-pleased with that particular work of his hands." Woman for him was indeed the "child twelve times unclean" of whom the poet speaks. She was the temptress who had ensnared the first man, and who still continued her damnable work; she was the being who is feeble, dangerous, mysteriously troublous. And even more than her poisonous beauty, he hated her loving soul.

He had often felt women's tenderness attack him, and though he knew himself to be unassailable, he grew exasperated at this need of loving which quivers continually in their hearts.

To his mind, God had only created woman to tempt man and to test him. Man should not approach her without those precautions for defense which he would take, and the fears he would cherish, near an ambush. Woman, indeed, was just like a trap, with her arms extended and her lips open toward a man.

He had toleration only for nuns, rendered harmless by their vow; but he treated them harshly notwithstanding, because, ever at the bottom of their chained-up hearts, their chastened hearts, he perceived the eternal tenderness that constantly went out even to him, although he was a priest.

He had a niece who lived with her mother in a little house near by. He was bent on making her a sister of charity. She was pretty and hare-brained, and a great tease. When the abbé sermonized, she laughed; when he was angry at her, she kissed him vehemently, pressing him to her heart, while he would seek involuntarily to free himself from her embrace. Notwithstanding, it made him taste a certain sweet joy, awaking deep within him that sensation of fatherhood which slumbers in every man.

Often he talked to her of God, of his God, walking beside her along the footpaths through the fields. She hardly listened, but looked at the sky, the grass, the flowers, with a joy of living which could be seen in her eyes. Sometimes she rushed forward to catch some flying creature, and bringing it back would cry: "Look, my uncle, how pretty it is; I should like to kiss it." And this necessity to "kiss flies" or sweet flowers worried, irritated, and revolted the priest, who saw, even in that, the ineradicable tenderness which ever springs in the hearts of women.

One day the sacristan's wife, who kept house for the Abbé Marignan, told him, very cautiously, that his niece had a lover!

He experienced a dreadful emotion, and he stood choking, with the soap all over his face, in the act of shaving.

When he found himself able to think and speak once more, he cried: "It is not true; you are lying, Melanie!"

But the peasant woman put her hand on her heart; "May our Lord judge me if I am lying, Monsieur le Curé. I tell you she goes to him every evening as soon as your sister is in bed. They meet each other beside the river. You have only to go there between ten o'clock and midnight, and see for yourself."

He ceased scratching his chin and commenced to pace the room quickly, as he always did in his hours of gravest thought. When he tried to begin his shaving again, he cut himself three times from nose to ear.

All day long, he remained silent, swollen with anger and with rage. To his priestly zeal against the mighty power of love was added the moral indignation of a father, of a teacher, of a keeper of souls, who has been deceived, robbed, played with by a child. He felt the egotistical sorrow that parents feel when their daughter announces that she has chosen a husband without them and in spite of their advice.

After his dinner, he tried to read a little, but he could not attune himself to it; and he grew angrier and angrier. When it struck ten, he took his cane, a formidable oaken club which he always carried when he had to go out at night to visit the sick. Smilingly he regarded the enormous cudgel, holding it in his solid, countryman's fist and cutting threatening circles with it in the air. Then, suddenly, he raised it, and grinding his teeth, he brought it down upon a chair, the back of which, split in two, fell heavily to the ground.

He opened his door to go out; but he stopped upon the threshold, surprised by such a splendor of moonlight as you seldom see.

Endowed as he was with an exalted spirit, such a spirit as must have belonged to those dreamer-poets, the Fathers of the Church, he felt himself suddenly softened and moved by the grand and serene beauty of the pale-faced night.

In his little garden, bathed in the soft brilliance, his fruit-trees, all a-row, were outlining in shadow upon the walk their slender limbs of wood scarce clothed with green; while the giant honeysuckle climbing on the house wall exhaled delicious, sugared breaths, which hovered through the warm, clear night like a perfumed soul.

He began to breathe deep, drinking the air as drunkards drink their wine, and walking slowly, ravished, surprised, and almost oblivious of his niece.

As he stepped into the open country he stopped to contemplate the whole plain, inundated by this caressing radiance, and drowned in the tender and languishing charm of the serene night. In chorus the frogs threw into space their short, metallic notes, and with the seduction of the moonlight, distant nightingales mingled that fitful music of theirs which brings no thoughts but dreams, a light and vibrant melody which seems attuned to kisses.

The abbé continued his walk, his courage failing, he knew not why. He felt, as it were, enfeebled, and suddenly exhausted; he had a great desire to sit down, to pause right there and praise God in all His works.

Below him, following the bends of the little river, wound a great line of poplars. On and about the banks, wrapping all the tortuous watercourse in a kind of light, transparent wadding, hung suspended a fine mist, a white vapor, which the moon-rays crossed, and silvered, and caused to gleam.

The priest paused yet again, penetrated to the depths of his soul by a strong and growing emotion. And a doubt, a vague uneasiness, seized on him; he felt that one of those questions he sometimes put to himself was now being born.

Why had God done this? Since the night is destined for sleep, for unconsciousness, for repose, for forgetfulness of everything, why, then, make it more charming than the day, sweeter than dawns and sunsets? And this slow, seductive star, more poetical than the sun, and so discreet that it seems designed to light up things too delicate, too mysterious, for the great luminary, — why had it come to brighten all the shades? Why did not the sweetest of all songsters go to rest like the others? Why set himself to singing in the vaguely troubling dark? Why this half-veil over the world? Why these quiverings of the heart, this emotion of the soul, this languor of the body? Why this display of seductions which mankind never sees, since night brings sleep? For whom was this sublime spectacle intended, this flood of poetry poured from heaven to earth? The abbé did not understand it at all.

But then, down there along the edge of the pasture appeared two shadows walking side by side under the arched roof of the trees all soaked in glittering mist.

The man was the taller, and had his arm about his mistress's neck; from time to time he kissed her on the forehead. They animated the lifeless landscape which enveloped them, a divine frame made, as it were, expressly for them. They seemed, these two, a single being, the being for whom this calm and silent night was destined; and they approached the priest like a living answer, the answer vouchsafed by his Master to his question.

He stood stock-still, overwhelmed, and with a beating heart. He likened it to some Bible story, such as the loves of Ruth and Boaz, the accomplishment of the will of the Lord in one of those great scenes talked of in holy writ. Through his head ran the versicles of the Song of Songs, the ardent cries, the calls of the body, all the passionate poetry of that poem which burns with tenderness and love. And he said to himself, "God perhaps has made such nights as this to clothe with his ideals the loves of men."

He withdrew before the couple, who went on arm in arm. It was really his niece; and now he asked himself if he had not been about to disobey God. For does not God indeed permit love, since He surrounds it visibly with splendor such as this?

And he fled, in amaze, almost ashamed, as if he had penetrated into a temple where he had no right to enter.

BRIC-À-BRAC

"If you would like to see the interesting bric-à-brac there, come with me," said my friend, Boisrené.

He then led me to the first story of a beautiful house, in a great street in Paris. We were received by a very strong man, of perfect manners, who took us from piece to piece showing us rare objects of which he mentioned the price carelessly. Great sums, ten, twenty, thirty, fifty thousand francs, came from his lips with so much grace and facility that one could not doubt that millions were shut up in the strong boxes of this merchant man of the world.

I had known him by name for a long time. Very clever, very tactful, very intelligent, he served as intermediary for all sorts of transactions. In touch with all the richest amateurs of Paris, and even of Europe and America, knowing their tastes, their preferences for the moment, he brought them by a word or a dispatch, if they lived in some far-off town, when he knew that some object was to be sold that would please them.

Men in the best of society had had recourse to him in times of embarrassment, perhaps to get money for play, perhaps to pay a debt, perhaps to sell a picture, a family jewel, or a tapestry, or even to sell a horse, where the owner was in close straits.

It was said that he never refused his services when he could foresee any chance of gain.

Boisrené seemed intimate with this curiosity merchant. They had managed more than one affair together. I myself looked at the man with much interest.

He was tall, thin, bald, and very elegant. His sweet, insinuating voice had a particular charm, a tentative charm, which gives to things a special value. When he held an article in his fingers, he turned it, re-turned it, and looked at it with so much directness, tactfulness, elegance, and sympathy that the object was at once embellished, transformed by his touch and his look. And one would immediately estimate it at a higher cost than before it passed from the show-case to his hand.

"And your Christ, the beautiful Christ of the Renaissance," said Boisrené, "that you showed me last year?"

The man smiled and replied:

"It is sold, and in rather a strange fashion. In fact, the whole story of a Parisian woman is in the sale. Would you like me to tell it to you?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Do you know the Baroness Samoris?"

"Yes and no. I have only seen her once, but I know who she is!"

"You know fully?"

"Yes."

"Are you willing to tell me, that I may see whether you are deceived or not?"

"Very willing. Madame Samoris is a woman of the world who has a daughter without ever having had a husband, as the saying goes. But, if she has not had a husband, she has lovers, after a discreet fashion, so that they are received into certain society which is tolerant or blind. She is constant at Church, receives the sacrament with reflection, after the fashion of one who knows, and never will compromise herself. She hopes her daughter will make a good marriage. Is it not so?"

"Yes, but I will complete your information; she is a kept woman who makes herself respected by her lovers more than if she did not live with them. That is rare merit; for in this way one obtains whatever is desired of a man, The one whom she chooses, without which a man would have doubts, pays court a long time, desires her with fear, solicits with shame, obtains with astonishment, and possesses with consideration. He does not perceive that he pays, so much tact does she use in taking; and she maintains their relation with such a tone of reserve, of dignity, of propriety, that in going away from her he would slap the face of a man capable of suspecting the virtue of his mistress. And that with the best faith in the world.

"I have rendered some services to this woman in many of her undertakings. She has no secrets from me.

"Somewhere in the first days of January, she came to me to borrow thirty thousand francs. I had not the amount at hand, you understand, but as I desired

to oblige her, I begged her to tell me her situation fully, that I might see if there was anything I could do for her.

"She told me things in such precautionary language as she might use in relating a most delicate story for her daughter's first communion. I finally understood that times were hard and that she found herself without a sou. The commercial crisis, political disturbances which the government actually seemed to entertain with pleasure, rumors of war, and the general constraint had made money hesitate, even in the hands of lovers. And then, she could not, this honest woman, give herself to the first comer.

"A man of the world, of the best world, was necessary for her, one who would preserve her reputation while furnishing the daily needs. A rake would compromise her forever, even though he were very rich, and make the marriage of her daughter problematical. She could not think of business arrangements, of dishonoring intermediaries who might be able to relieve her of her embarrassment for a time. She must maintain the standard of her house, continue to receive with open doors, in order not to lose the hope of finding, among her visitors, the discreet and distinguished friend whom she was waiting to choose.

"For my part, I observed to her that there seemed little chance of my thirty thousand francs returning to me, since, when they were eaten up, she would have to obtain sixty thousand at a single blow in order to give me half.

"She was disconsolate while listening to me, and I could think of nothing to be done, when an idea, a truly genial idea, crossed my mind. I had just

bought the Christ of the Renaissance which I showed you, an admirable piece, the most beautiful in that style that I have ever seen.

"'My dear friend,' said I to her, 'I am going to make you take this little ivory home with you. You can invent an ingenious story, touching, poetic, whatever you wish, which will explain your desire of parting with it. It can be understood that it is an heirloom of the family, inherited from your father.

"'I will see some amateurs for you and take them there myself. The rest you will attend to. I will let you understand their situation by a word, a watchword. This piece is worth fifty thousand francs, but I let you have it for thirty thousand. The difference will be yours.'

"She reflected some moments with a profound air and then replied:

"'Yes, perhaps it is a good idea. I thank you very much.'

"The next day I sent the Christ of the Renaissance to her house, and that evening I sent to her the Baron Saint-Hospital. For three months I addressed clients to her, clients of the best, who were confident of my judgment in business. But I heard no one speak of her.

"Then, having received a foreign customer who spoke very bad French, I decided to present him myself at the house of Madame Samoris, in order to let him see the piece.

"A footman all in black received us and showed us into a pretty drawing-room, furnished with taste, where we waited some minutes. She appeared, charming, extending her hand to me, making us be

seated. When I explained the motive of my visit, she rang.

"The footman reappeared.

"'See if Miss Isabelle can let us enter her chapel,' she said to him.

"The young girl herself brought the response. She was about fifteen, with a good, modest appearance, and all the freshness of youth. She wished to guide us herself into her chapel.

"It was a sort of pious boudoir, where a silver lamp was burning before the Christ of the Renaissance, my property, couched on a bed of black velvet. The setting of the scene was charming and very clever. The child made the sign of the cross, and then said: 'Look, gentlemen, is it not beautiful?'

"I took the object, examined it, and declared it remarkable. The stranger, also, considered it, but he seemed much more occupied with the women than with the Christ.

"One felt good in their home, felt the incense, the flowers, the perfume. One found complete repose there. It was truly a comfortable dwelling, inviting to rest.

"When we had re-entered the drawing-room, I broached, with reserve and delicacy, the question of price. Madame Samoris asked, lowering her eyes, fifty thousand francs. Then she added:

"'If you wish to see it again, sir, I scarcely ever go out before three o'clock, and you will find me here any day.'

"In the street, the stranger asked me some details about the Baroness, whom he found charming. But I did not undertake to say much for her, nor of her.

"Three months more passed.

"One morning, not more than five days ago, she came to my house at the breakfast hour and, placing a pocket-book in my hand, said: 'My dear, you are an angel. Here are fifty thousand francs; *I* have bought your Christ of the Renaissance, and I pay twenty thousand francs more than the price agreed upon, on the condition that you will always — always send me clients — because the piece is still for sale.'"

THE ARTIST'S WIFE

CURVED like a crescent moon, the little town of Étretat, with its white cliffs and its blue sea, is reposing under the sun of a grand July day. At the two points of the crescent are the two gates, the little one at the right, and the large one at the left, as if it were gradually advancing to the water—on one side a dwarfed foot, on the other, a leg of giant proportions; and the spire, nearly as high as the cliff, large at the base and fine at the summit, points its slim head toward the heavens.

Along the beach, upon the float, a crowd is seated watching the bathers. Upon the terrace of the Casino, another crowd, seated or walking, parades under the full light of day, a garden of pretty costumes, shaded by red and blue umbrellas embroidered in great flowers of silk. At the end of the promenade, on the terrace, there are other people, calm, quiet, walking slowly along up and down, as far as possible from the elegant multitude.

A young man, well-known, and celebrated as a painter, John Summer, was walking along with a listless air beside an invalid chair in which reposed a young woman, his wife. A domestic rolled the little carriage along, gently, while the crippled woman looked with sad eyes upon the joy of the heavens, the joy of the day, and the joy of other people.

They were not talking, they were not looking at each other. The woman said: "Let us stop a little."

They stopped, and the painter seated himself upon a folding chair arranged for him by the valet. Those who passed behind the couple, sitting there mute and motionless, regarded him with pitying looks. A complete legend of devotion had found its way about. He had married her in spite of her infirmity, moved by his love, they said.

Not far from there, two young men were seated on a capstan, chatting and looking off toward the horizon.

"No, it is not true," said one of them, "I tell you I know much of John Summer's life."

"Then why did he marry her? For she was really an invalid at that time, was she not?"

"Just as you see her now. He married her—he married her—as one marries—well, because he was a fool!"

"How is that?"

"How is that? That is how, my friend. That is the whole of it. One is a goose because he is a goose. And then you know, painters make a specialty of ridiculous marriages; they nearly always marry their models, or some old mistress, or some one of

the women among the varied assortment they run up against. Why is it? Does anyone know? It would seem, on the contrary, that constant association with this race that we call models would be enough to disgust them forever with that kind of female. Not at all. After having made them pose, they marry them. Read that little book of Alphonse Daudet, 'Artists' Wives,' so true, so cruel, and so beautiful.

"As for the couple you see there, the accident that brought about that marriage was of a unique and terrible kind. The little woman played a comedy, or rather a frightful drama. In fact, she risked all for all. Was she sincere? Does she really love John? Can one ever know that? Who can determine, with any precision, the real from the make-believe, in the acts of women? They are always sincere in an eternal change of impressions. They are passionate, criminal, devoted, admirable, and ignoble, ready to obey unseizable emotions. They lie without ceasing, without wishing to, without knowing it, without comprehension, and they have with this, in spite of this, an absolute freedom from sensation and sentiment, which they evince in violent resolutions, unexpected, incomprehensible folly, putting to rout all our reason, all our custom of deliberation, and all our combination of egotism. The unforeseen bluntness of their determinations make them, to us, indecipherable enigmas. We are always asking: 'Are they sincere? Are they false?'

"But, my friend, they are sincere and false at the same time, because it is in their nature to be the two extremes and neither the one nor the other. Look at the means the most honest employ for obtaining what

they wish. They are both complicated and simple, these means are. So complicated that we never guess them in advance, so simple that after we have been the victims of them, we cannot help being astonished and saying to ourselves: 'My! Did she play me as easily as that?' And they succeed always, my good friend, especially when it is a question of making us marry them.

"But here is John Summer's story:

"The little wife was a model, as the term is usually understood. She posed for him. She was pretty, particularly elegant, and possessed, it appears, a divine figure. He became her lover, as one becomes the lover of any seductive woman he sees often. He imagines he loves her with his whole soul. It is a singular phenomenon. As soon as one desires a woman, he believes sincerely that he can no longer live without her. They know very well that their time has arrived. They know that disgust always follows possession; that, in order to pass one's existence by the side of another being, not brutal, physical appetite, so quickly extinguished, is the need, but an accordance of soul, of temperament, of humor. In a seduction that one undertakes, in bodily form, it is necessary to mingle a certain sensual intoxication with a charming depth of mind.

"Well, he believed that he loved her; he made her a heap of promises of fidelity and lived completely with her. She was gentle and endowed with that undeniable elegance which the Parisian woman acquires so easily. She tippled and babbled and said silly things, which seemed *spirituelle*, from the droll way in which she put them. She had each moment

some little trick or pretty gesture to charm the eye of the painter. When she raised an arm, or stooped down, or got into a carriage, and when she took your hand, her movements were always perfect, exactly as they should be.

"For three months John did not perceive that, in reality, she was like all models. They rented for the summer a little house at Andressy. I was there one evening, when the first disquiet germinated in the mind of my friend.

"As the night was radiant, we wished to take a turn along the bank of the river. The moon threw in the water a glittering shower of light, crumbling its yellow reflections in the eddy, in the current, in the whole of the large river, flowing slowly along.

"We were going along the bank, a little quiet from the vague exaltation which the dreaminess of the evening threw about us. We were wishing we might accomplish superhuman things, might love some unknown beings, deliciously poetic. Strange ecstasies, desires, and aspirations were trembling in us.

"And we kept silent, penetrated by the serene and living freshness of the charming night, by that freshness of the moon which seems to go through the body, penetrate it, bathe the mind, perfume it and steep it in happiness.

"Suddenly Josephine (she called herself Josephine) cried out:

"'Oh! did you see the great fish that jumped down there?'

"He replied, without looking or knowing: 'Yes, dearie.'

"She was angry. 'No, you have not seen it since your back was turned to it.'

"He laughed. 'Yes, it is true. It is so fine here that I was thinking of nothing.'

"She was silent; but at the end of a minute, the need of speaking seized her, and she asked:

"'Are you going to Paris to-morrow?'

"He answered: 'I don't know.'

"Again she was irritated:

"'Perhaps you think it is amusing to walk out without saying anything,' she said; 'one usually talks if he is not too stupid.'

"He said nothing. Then, knowing well, thanks to her wicked, womanly instinct, that he would be exasperated, she began to sing that irritating air with which our ears and minds had been wearied for the past two years:

"'I was looking in the air.'

"He murmured: 'I beg you be quiet.'

"She answered furiously: 'Why should I keep quiet?'

"He replied: 'You will arouse the neighborhood.'

"Then the scene took place, the odious scene, with unexpected reproaches, tempestuous recrimina tions, then tears. All was over. They went back to the house. He allowed her to go on without reply, calmed by the divine evening and overwhelmed by the whirlwind of foolishness.

"Three months later, he was struggling desperately in the invincible, invisible bonds with which habit enlaces our life. She held him, oppressed him,

martyrized him. They quarreled from morning until evening, insulting and combating each other.

"Finally, he wished to end it, to break, at any price. He sold all his work, realizing some twenty thousand francs (he was then little known) and, borrowing some money from friends, he left it all on the chimney-piece with a letter of adieu.

"He came to my house as a refuge. Toward three o'clock in the afternoon, the bell rang. I opened the door. A woman jumped into my face, brushed me aside, and rushed into my studio; it was she.

"He stood up on seeing her enter. She threw at his feet the envelope containing the bank-notes, with a truly noble gesture and said, with short breath:

"'Here is your money. I do not care for it.'

"She was very pale and trembling, ready, apparently for any folly. He, too, grew pale, pale from anger and vexation, ready, perhaps, for any violence.

"He asked: 'What do you want, then?'

"She replied: 'I do not wish to be treated like a child. You have implored me and taken me. I ask you for nothing—only protect me.'

"He stamped his foot, saying: 'No, it is too much! And if you believe that you are going—'

"I took hold of his arm. 'Wait, John,' said I, 'let me attend to it.'

"I went toward her, and gently, little by little, I reasoned with her, emptying the sack of arguments that are usually employed in such cases. She listened to me motionless, with eyes fixed, obstinate and dumb. Finally, thinking of nothing more to say, and seeing that the affair would not end pleasantly, I struck one more last note. I said:

"'He will always love you, little one, but his family wishes him to marry, and you know—'

"This was a surprise for her! 'Ah!—Ah!—now I comprehend—' she began.

"And turning toward him she continued: 'And so—you are going to marry!'

"He answered carelessly: 'Yes.'

"Then she took a step forward: 'If you marry, I will kill myself—you understand.'

"'Well, then, kill yourself,' he hissed over his shoulder.

"She choked two or three times, her throat seeming bound by a frightful anguish. 'You say—you say— Repeat it!'

"He repeated: 'Well, kill yourself, if that pleases you!'

"She replied, very pale with fright: 'It is not necessary to dare me. I will throw myself from that window.'

"He began to laugh, advanced to the window, opened it, bowed like a person allowing some one to precede him, saying:

"'Here is the way; after you!'

"She looked at him a second with fixed eyes, terribly excited; then, taking a leap, as one does in jumping a hedge in the field, she passed before him, before me, leaped over the sill and disappeared.

"I shall never forget the effect that this open window made upon me, after having seen it traversed by that falling body; it appeared to me in a second, great as the sky and as empty as space. And I recoiled instinctively, not daring to look, as if I had fallen myself.

"John, dismayed, made no motion.

"They took up the poor girl with both legs broken. She could never walk again.

"Her lover, foolish with remorse, and perhaps touched by remembrance, took her and married her. There you have it, my dear."

The evening was come. The young woman, being cold, wished to go in; and the domestic began to roll the invalid's little carriage toward the village. The painter walked along beside his wife, without having exchanged a word with her for an hour.

IN THE SPRING

WHEN the first fine spring days come, and the earth awakes and assumes its garment of verdure, when the perfumed warmth of the air caresses your face and fills your lungs, and even seems to reach your heart, you feel vague longings for an undefined happiness, a wish to run, to walk anywhere and everywhere, to inhale the soul of the spring. As the winter had been very severe the year before, this longing assumed an intoxicating feeling in May; it was like a superabundance of sap.

Well, one morning on waking, I saw from my window the blue sky glowing in the sun above the neighboring houses. The canaries hanging in the windows were singing loudly, and so were the servants on every floor; a cheerful noise rose up from the streets, and I went out, with my spirits as bright as the day, to go — I did not exactly know where. Everybody I met seemed to be smiling; an air of happiness appeared to pervade everything in the

warm light of returning spring. One might almost have said that a breeze of love was blowing through the city, and the young women whom I saw in the streets in morning toilettes, in the depths of whose eyes there lurked a hidden tenderness, and who walked with languid grace, filled my heart with agitation.

Without knowing how or why, I found myself on the banks of the Seine. Steamboats were starting for Suresnes, and suddenly I was seized by an unconquerable wish for a walk through the wood. The deck of the *mouche** was crowded with passengers, for the sun in early spring draws you out of the house, in spite of yourself, and everyone is active, visiting and gossiping with the people sitting near.

I had a female neighbor; a little workgirl, no doubt, who possessed the true Parisian charm. Her little head, had light curly hair like frizzed light, which came down to her ears and to the nape of her neck, danced in the wind, and then became such fine, such light-colored down, that you could scarcely see it, but on which you felt an irresistible desire to impress a shower of kisses.

Under the magnetism of my looks, she turned her head toward me, and then immediately looked down, while a slight dimpling of the flesh, the forerunner of a smile, also showed that fine, silky, pale down which the sun was gilding a little.

The calm river grew wider; the atmosphere was warm and perfectly still, but a murmur of life seemed to fill all space.

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*Fly. A name given to the small steamboats on the Seine.

My neighbor raised her eyes again, and, this time, as I was still looking at her, she smiled, decidedly. She was charming, and in her passing glance I saw a thousand things of which I had hitherto been ignorant. I saw in it unknown depths, all the charm of tenderness, all the poetry which we dream of, all the happiness which we are continually in search of. I felt an insane longing to open my arms and to carry her off somewhere, so as to whisper the sweet music of words of love into her ears.

I was just going to speak to her when somebody touched me on the shoulder. Turning round in some surprise, I saw an ordinary looking man, who was neither young nor old, and who gazed at me sadly:

"I should like to speak to you," he said.

I made a grimace, which he no doubt saw, for he added:

"It is a matter of importance."

I got up, therefore, and followed him to the other end of the boat, and then he said:

"Monsieur, when winter comes, with its cold, wet, and snowy weather, your doctor says to you constantly: 'Keep your feet warm, guard against chills, colds, bronchitis, rheumatism, and pleurisy.'

"Then you are very careful, you wear flannel, a heavy great-coat, and thick shoes, but all this does not prevent you from passing two months in bed. But when spring returns, with its leaves and flowers, its warm, soft breezes, and its smell of the fields, causing you vague disquiet and causeless emotion, nobody says to you:

"'Monsieur, beware of love! It is lying in ambush everywhere; it is watching for you at every corner; all its snares are laid, all its weapons are sharpened, all its guiles are prepared! Beware of love. Beware of love. It is more dangerous than brandy, bronchitis, or pleurisy! It never forgives, and makes everybody commit irreparable follies.'

"Yes, Monsieur, I say that the French government ought to put large public notices on the walls, with these words: 'Return of spring. French citizens, beware of love'; just as they put: 'Beware of paint.'

"However, as the government will not do this, I must supply its place, and I say to you: 'Beware of love,' for it is just going to seize you, and it is my duty to inform you of it, just as in Russia they inform anyone that his nose is frozen."

I was much astonished at this individual, and assuming a dignified manner, I said:

"Really, Monsieur, you appear to me to be interfering in a matter which is no business of yours."

He made an abrupt movement, and replied:

"Ah, Monsieur, Monsieur! If I see that a man is in danger of being drowned at a dangerous spot, ought I to let him perish? So just listen to my story, and you will see why I ventured to speak to you like this.

"It was about this time last year that it occurred. But, first of all, I must tell you that I am a clerk in the Admiralty, where our chiefs, the commissioners, take their gold lace as quill-driving officers seriously, and treat us like foretop men on board a ship. Well, from my office I could see a small bit of blue

sky and the swallows, and I felt inclined to dance among my portfolios.

"My yearning for freedom grew so intense, that, in spite of my repugnance, I went to see my chief, who was a short, bad-tempered man, who was always cross. When I told him that I was not well, he looked at me, and said: 'I do not believe it, Monsieur, but be off with you! Do you think that any office can go on with clerks like you?' I started at once, and went down the Seine. It was a day like this, and I took the *mouche* to go as far as Saint-Cloud. Ah! What a good thing it would have been if my chief had refused me permission to leave the office for the day!

"I seemed to expand in the sun. I loved it all; the steamer, the river, the trees, the houses, my fellow-passengers, everything. I felt inclined to kiss something, no matter what; it was love laying its snare. Presently, at the Trocadéro, a girl, with a small parcel in her hand, came on board and sat down opposite to me. She was certainly pretty; but it is surprising, Monsieur, how much prettier women seem to us when it is fine, at the beginning of the spring. Then they have an intoxicating charm, something quite peculiar about them. It is just like drinking wine after the cheese.

"I looked at her, and she also looked at me, but only occasionally, like that girl did at you, just now; but at last, by dint of looking at each other constantly, it seemed to me that we knew each other well enough to enter into conversation, and I spoke to her, and she replied. She was decidedly pretty and nice, and she intoxicated me, Monsieur!

"She got out at Saint-Cloud, and I followed her. She went and delivered her parcel, but when she returned, the boat had just started. I walked by her side, and the warmth of the air made us both sigh.

"'It would be very nice in the wood,' I said.

"'Indeed, it would!' she replied.

"'Shall we go there for a walk, Mademoiselle?'

"She gave me a quick, upward look, as if to see exactly what I was like, and then, after a little hesitation, she accepted my proposal, and soon we were there, walking side by side. Under the foliage, which was still rather thin, the tall, thick, bright, green grass was inundated by the sun and full of small insects making love to one another, and birds were singing in all directions. My companion began to jump and to run, intoxicated by the air and the smell of the country, and I ran and jumped behind her. How stupid we are at times, Monsieur!

"Then she wildly sang a thousand things; opera airs and the song of *Musette!* The song of *Musette!* How poetical it seemed to me, then! I almost cried over it. Ah! Those silly songs make us lose our heads; take my advice, never marry a woman who sings in the country, especially if she sings the song of *Musette!*

"She soon grew tired, and sat down on a grassy slope, and I sat down at her feet. I took her hands, her little hands, so marked with the needle, and they moved me. I said to myself: 'These are the sacred marks of toil.' Oh, Monsieur! do you know what those sacred marks of labor mean? They mean all the gossip of the workroom, the whispered blackguardism, the mind soiled by all the filth that is

talked; they mean lost chastity, foolish chatter, all the wretchedness of daily bad habits, all the narrowness of ideas which belongs to women of the lower orders, united in the girl whose sacred fingers bear *the sacred marks of toil.*

"Then we looked into each other's eyes for a long while. What power a woman's eye has! How it agitates us, how it invades our very being, takes possession of us, and dominates us. How profound it seems, how full of infinite promise! People call that looking into each other's souls! Oh! Monsieur, what humbug! If we could see into each other's souls, we should be more careful of what we did. However, I was caught, and crazy after her, and tried to take her into my arms, but she said: 'Hands off!' Then I threw myself down, and opened my heart to her, and poured out all the affection that was suffocating me, my head on her knees. She seemed surprised at my manner, and gave me a sidelong glance, as if to say: 'Ah! So that is the way women make a fool of you, old fellow! Very well, we will see.' In love, Monsieur, men are the artists, and women are the dealers.

"No doubt I could have won her, and I saw my own stupidity later, but what I wanted was not a woman's person, it was love, it was the ideal. I was sentimental, when I ought to have been using my time to a better purpose.

"As soon as she had had enough of my declarations of affection, she got up, and we returned to Saint-Cloud, but I did not leave her until we got to Paris. But she looked so sad as we were returning, that at last I asked her what was the matter.

"'I am thinking,' she replied, 'that this has been one of those days of which we have but few in life.'

"And my heart beat as if it would break my ribs.

"I saw her on the following Sunday, and the next Sunday, and every Sunday. I took her to Bougival, Saint-Germain, Maison-Lafitte, Poissy; to every suburban resort of lovers.

"The little jade, in turn, pretended to love me, until, at last, I altogether lost my head, and three months later I married her.

"What can you expect, Monsieur, when a man is a clerk, living alone, without any relations, or anyone to advise him? You say to yourself: 'How sweet life would be with a wife!'

"And so you get married, and she calls you names from morning till night, understands nothing, knows nothing, chatters continually, sings the song of *Musette* at the top of her voice (oh! that song of *Musette*, how tired one gets of it!); quarrels with the charcoal dealer, tells the porter all her domestic details, confides all the secrets of her bedroom to the neighbor's servant, discusses her husband with the tradespeople, and has her head so stuffed with stupid stories, with idiotic superstitions, with extraordinary ideas, and monstrous prejudices, that I—for what I have said, applies particularly to myself—shed tears of discouragement every time I talk to her."

He stopped, as he was rather out of breath, and very much moved. I looked at him, for I felt pity for this poor, artless devil, and I was just going to give him some sort of answer, when the boat stopped. We were at Saint-Cloud.

The little woman who had so taken my fancy got up in order to land. She passed close to me, and gave me a side glance and a furtive smile—one of those smiles that drive you wild; then she jumped on the landing-stage. I sprang forward to follow her, but my neighbor laid hold of my arm. I shook myself loose, however, whereupon he seized the skirt of my coat, and pulled me back, exclaiming:

"You shall not go! You shall not go!" in such a loud voice, that everybody turned round and laughed. I remained standing motionless and furious, but without venturing to face scandal and ridicule, and the steamboat started.

The little woman on the landing-stage looked at me as I went off with an air of disappointment, while my persecutor rubbed his hands and whispered to me:

"You must admit that I have done you a great service."

THE REAL ONE AND THE OTHER

"WELL, really," said Chasseval, standing with his back to the fire, "could any of those respectable shopkeepers and wine-growers have possibly believed that that pretty little Parisian woman, with soft innocent eyes, like those of a Madonna, with smiling lips and golden hair, who always dressed so simply, was their candidate's mistress?"

She was a wonderful help to him, and accompanied him even to the most outlying farms; went to the meetings in the small village *cafés,* had a pleasant and suitable word for everyone, did not recoil at a glass of mulled wine or a grip of the hand, and was always ready to join the *farandole.** She seemed to be so in love with Eliéane Rulhière, to trust him so entirely, to be so proud of forming half of his life, and of belonging to

*A dance in Provence in which the dancers form a chain, and the movements are directed by the leader.

him, giving him such looks full of pleasure and of hope, and listening to all he said so intently, that voters who might have hesitated allowed themselves by degrees to be talked over and persuaded, and promised their votes to the young doctor whose name they never heard mentioned in the district before.

That electoral campaign had been like a truant's escapade for Jane Dardenne; it was a delightful and unexpected holiday, and as she was an actress at heart, she played her part seriously, and threw herself into her character, enjoying herself more than she had ever enjoyed herself in her most adventurous outings.

And then there came in the pleasure of being taken for a woman of the world, of being flattered, respected, and envied, of getting out of the usual groove for a time, and also the dream that this journey of a few weeks would have this result, that her lover would not separate from her on their return, but would sacrifice the woman whom he no longer loved, and whom he ironically used to call his "Cinderella," to her.

At night, when they had laid aside all pretense, and were alone in their room in the hotel, she coaxed him and flattered him, spurred his ambition on, threw her quivering arms around him, and amid her kisses, whispered those words to him which make a man proud, warm his heart, and give him strength, like a dram of alcohol.

The two between them captured the district, and won the election easily, for in spite of his youth, Eliéane Rulhière was elected by a majority of five thousand. Then, of course, there were more *fêtes*

and banquets, at which Jane was present, and where she was received with enthusiastic shouts; there were fireworks, where she was obliged to set light to the first rocket, and balls at which she astonished these worthy people by her affability. And when they left, three little girls dressed in white, as if they were going to be confirmed, came on to the platform and recited some verses complimentary to her, while the band played the "Marseillaise," the women waved their pocket handkerchiefs, and the men their hats; and leaning out of the carriage window, looking charming in her traveling costume, with a smile on her lips and moist eyes, as was fitting at such a pathetic leave-taking, actress as she was, with a sudden and childlike gesture she blew kisses to them from the tips of her fingers, and said:

"Good-bye, my friends, good-bye, only for the present; I shall never forget you!"

The deputy, who was also very effusive, had invited his principal supporters to come and see him in Paris, as there were plenty of excursion trains. They all took him at his word, and Rulhière was obliged to invite them all to dinner.

In order to avoid any possible mishaps, he gave his wife a foretaste of their guests. He told her that they were rather noisy, talkative, and unpolished, and that they would, no doubt, astonish her by their manners and their accent, but that, as they had great influence, and were excellent men, they deserved a good reception. It was a very useful precaution, for when they came into the drawing-room in their new clothes, beaming with pleasure, and with hair pomatumed as if they had been going to a country wed-

ding, they felt inclined to fall down before the new Madame Rulhière to whom the deputy introduced them, and who seemed to be perfectly at home there.

At first they were embarrassed, felt uncomfortable, and out of place, did not know what to say, and had to seek their words. They buttoned and unbuttoned their gloves, answered her questions at random, and racked their brains to discover the solution of the enigma. Captain Mouredus looked at the fire, with the fixed gaze of a somnambulist; Marius Barbaste scratched his fingers mechanically; while the three others, the factory manager, Casemajel, Roquetton, the lawyer, and Dustugue, the hotel proprietor, looked at Rulhière anxiously.

The lawyer was the first to recover himself. He got up from his armchair laughing heartily, dug the deputy in the ribs with his elbow, and said:

"I understand it all, I understand it; you thought that people do not come to Paris to be bored, eh? Madame is delightful, and I congratulate you, Monsieur."

He gave a wink, and made signs behind his back to his friends, and then the captain had his turn.

"We are not boobies, and that fellow Roquetton is the most knowing of the lot of us. Ah! Monsieur Rulhière, without any exaggeration, you are the cream of good fellows."

And with a flushed face, and expanding his chest, he said sonorously:

"They certainly turn them out very pretty in your part of the country, my little lady!"

Madame Rulhière, who did not know what to say, had gone up to her husband for protection; but she

felt much inclined to go to her own room under some pretext or other, in order to escape from her intolerable task. She kept her ground, however, during the whole of dinner, which was a noisy, jovial meal, during which the five electors, with their elbows on the table, and their waistcoats unbuttoned, and half drunk, told coarse stories and swore like troopers. But as the coffee and the liqueurs were served in the smoking-room she took leave of her guests in an impatient voice, and went to her own room with the hasty step of an escaped prisoner, who is afraid of being retaken.

The electors sat staring after her with gaping mouths, and Mouredus lit a cigar, and said:

"Just listen to me, Monsieur Rulhière; it was very kind of you to invite us here, to your little quiet establishment, but to speak to you frankly, I should not in your place wrong my lawful wife for such a stuck-up piece of goods as this one is."

"The captain is quite right," Roquetton the notary opined; "Madame Rulhière, the lawful Madame Rulhière, is much more amiable and altogether nicer. You are a scoundrel to deceive her: but when may we hope to see her?"

And with a paternal grimace, he added:

"But do not be uneasy, we will all hold our tongues; it would be too sad if she were to find it out."

A REPULSE

I was journeying to Turin, *via* Corsica. At Nice I took the steamer for Bastia and when we were fairly out at sea, I observed a young woman with a modest and gentle air, sitting on the deck watching the passengers, as I was. I said to myself, "Ah, here is a diversion."

I sat down opposite her and began to study her, endeavoring, as one will under such circumstances, to determine her age, her position, and in short, who she was. I noted the various points of her face and figure, the turn of her ankle, the swell of her bust, the cut of her dress, the shape of her hand, which reveals the delicacy of the arm, and the fashioning of her ear, a thing which indicates origin far more accurately than any certificate of birth, which is always open to question.

I endeavored to catch the tones of her voice, the better to gain an insight into her nature and the inclinations of her heart. The tones of the voice and the little imperceptible shades of speech reveal to an

acute observer the mysterious texture of the soul, for the concord between thought and the organ which voices it is always perfect, although not often easy to detect. Thus I observed my neighbor attentively, watching for any signals and analyzing her pose in the hope that it would yield me some revelation of her.

She opened a little bag and took out a newspaper. I rubbed my hands. "Ah," thought I, "tell me what you read and I will tell you what you think."

She began at the leading article, with a little air of contentment and satisfaction. The name of the paper I could read clearly—"L'Echo de Paris." I found myself perplexed. She was reading a *chronique* by Scholl. The deuce! So she is an admirer of Scholl? She began to smile: ah, a Frenchwoman! Evidently not a prude, the dear girl! Very good. An admirer of Scholl,—yes, and she likes the Parisian spirit, the delicacy mingled with salt and pepper. A good sign! And now, said I, for final proof.

I went over and took a seat near her and began to read, with a show of interest, a volume of poetry which I had purchased on starting, "La Chanson d'Amour," by Felix Frank.

I noticed that she caught the name on the cover with a quick glance of her eye, as a bird on the wing will catch a fly. Several of the passengers walked about in front of us observing her. But she seemed deeply interested in her story. When she had finished she laid the paper down at her side.

I bowed and said to her, "Will you be good enough to allow me, Madame, to have a look at your paper?"

"With pleasure," she replied.

"Let me offer to you in return this volume of poems."

"Thank you. Is it amusing?"

I was a little puzzled at this question. You don't expect to be asked if a book of poetry is amusing. Still I replied:

"It is better than that. It is charming, delicate, and exceedingly artistic."

"Ah, then, let me see it."

She took the book, opened it, and turned over the pages with a little air of surprise, which showed she was not in the habit of reading poetry.

One moment she appeared affected, at the next she smiled, but with a very different smile from that with which she had read her journal.

"Do you like it?" I asked her suddenly.

"Yes, in a way," she answered, "but I prefer something gay, something very gay. I am not in the least sentimental." And so we entered into a conversation. I learned that she was the wife of a captain of dragoons garrisoned at Ajaccio, and that she was on her way to rejoin her husband. For a moment I thought that she did not care for him; that she liked him, perhaps, but in a reserved sort of a way, as a woman may still like a man whom she has once loved, but a man who has failed to come up to the standard of the hopes and wishes she had formed for him in the early days of their betrothal.

He had taken her from garrison to garrison, through a number of small out-of-the-way towns, each duller than the last, and now he had sent for her to this island, which must be positively dreadful!

No! life was certainly not entirely delightful for everyone! She would have preferred greatly to remain with her parents at Lyons, where she knew everybody. But now she was obliged to go to Corsica. The War Minister, indeed, was not very kind to her husband, who nevertheless had a splendid record of service.

Then we went on to talk of places where she would have liked to live.

"Do you like Paris?" I asked.

"Like Paris?" she exclaimed, "is it possible you can ask me such a question?" and she began to speak of Paris with such ardor, such enthusiasm, and such exaggerated longing, that I said to myself, "There is the chord to strike!"

She adored Paris from afar, with the curious longing and passionate admiration of a provincial — the impatient infatuation of a caged bird who looks toward the wood all day, from the window where he hangs.

She began to question me, stammering in her eagerness; she wanted to learn everything in five minutes. She knew the names of everyone of note, and of many others of whom I had never even heard.

"How is M. Gounod?" she cried, "and M. Sardou? Oh! how I delight in Monsieur Sardou's plays! how bright and gay they are! Every time that I see one, I dream of it for the next eight days! I have read, too, one of Monsieur Daudet's books which pleased me immensely; 'Sapho,' do you know it? Is M. Daudet a nice fellow? Have you seen him? And M. Zola — what do you think of him? If you only knew how I cried over 'Germinal!' Do you remember the poor little child who died without a

light? How dreadful that was! It almost made me ill. It was anything but a laughing matter. I have read a work of Monsieur Bourget's, also: 'A Cruel Enigma.' I have a cousin who lost her head so completely over the book that she actually wrote to Monsieur Bourget about it! I found it too poetical myself; I prefer something more amusing. And do you know Monsieur Grevin? and M. Coquelin? and M. Damala? And M. Rochefort?—they say he is extremely witty! Then there is Monsieur de Cassagnac; it seems as though he is always fighting."

* * * * * * *

At the end of about an hour her questions were nearly exhausted; and having satisfied her curiosity in the most fanciful manner, I thought it was now my turn to talk. I began to tell her stories of the world of Paris, the world of fashion; and she listened with all her ears and all her heart. Ah, she must have gained a curious idea of the fine ladies of Paris!

I told her of nothing but doubtful adventures, of clandestine meetings, of speedy conquests, and passionate defeats. Every now and then she asked, "Is it *really* like this in the world you speak of?"

I would smile mischievously and say: "Well, it is only the middle classes—people in trade—that lead a narrow and monotonous life, out of respect for virtue, a virtue for which no one gives them credit!"

And then I endeavored, by ironical, philosophic, and boasting speeches in turn, to strike at everything good and virtuous.

I made a mock of those poor creatures who allow themselves to grow old without ever having known

anything that was sweet and tender, never having tasted the delicious pleasures of stolen kisses; and that because they happened to be married to some good stick of a husband, whose conjugal reserve let them drift on until they died in ignorance of the best of life.

Then I recounted all sorts of anecdotes and intrigues which I assured her were known to all the world. And as a sort of refrain came stories discreetly praising the pleasures to be derived from forbidden affections, or sensations stolen like fruit by the way and forgotten as soon as tasted.

The night came on—a night still and warm. The great vessel, trembling from the beating of her engines, glided over the water, while overhead the violet heaven, like an immense dome, was starred with fire.

The young woman no longer spoke; she breathed slowly, and sighed now and again. Suddenly she rose.

"I am going to bed, so I will wish you good night," she said, and shook hands with me.

I knew that the following evening she would have to take the stage which goes from Bastia to Ajaccio across the mountains, and that is all night *en route*.

"Good night, Madame," I replied, and I in turn sought my berth.

Now, I had taken all of the places in the stage for the next night; all four for myself alone. We arrived at Bastia late in the afternoon of the following day. I had seen nothing of my traveling companion since the evening before. Collecting my

luggage, I prepared to take my place in the stage and settle myself to the journey. Just as I was climbing into the tumble-down old vehicle, which was about to start, the conductor came up and asked if I would consent to give up one seat to a lady.

"What lady?" I inquired, rather brusquely.

"The wife of an officer, who is going to Ajaccio," replied the conductor.

"Oh! very well, you may tell the lady that I offer her a seat with pleasure."

The conductor went off, and a few minutes later returned accompanied by the young woman, who said she had been asleep all day. She apologized for taking the place, and thanked me prettily as she got in.

The carriage was a sort of box tightly closed, only admitting daylight through the two doors. There we were, *tête-à-tête* inside.

The carriage swung off at a sharp trot, and was soon toiling up the mountain. A fresh powerful smell of aromatic herbs came in through the lowered window-sash. It was that strong odor which the island of Corsica seems to spread all round herself, to such a distance that mariners recognize it almost before sighting the land. It is as penetrating as the fragrant mist,—the damp of the green earth impregnated with perfume, which the sun has drawn from her, and thrown to the passing wind.

I returned to the subject of Paris, and she again began to listen with eager attention.

Night had closed in. I could no longer see anything, not even the spot of white which a short time before had indicated the whereabouts of my compan-

ion's face. Only the driver's lantern lighted up the four horses, as they climbed the steep path. At times the noise of a torrent tumbling down in the rocks reached us, mingled with the sound of a far-off sheep-bell, then died away in the distance behind.

Presently I advanced my foot very softly and encountered hers which she did not withdraw. For a time I waited without moving. Then all of a sudden, I changed my tactics and spoke in tender tones of the sweetness of friendship and true affection. Getting no reply, I stretched out my hand and gently touched hers. She did not move.

Talking softly all the time, I bent my head close to hers, almost touching her ear and mouth. I could hear her heart beating loud and quickly; then leaning forward I touched her neck lightly with my lips, feeling sure she would make no objection, so sure in fact that I would willingly have wagered any amount on the certainty.

But suddenly she started up as though she had been awakened from sleep, with so violent a start that I was nearly thrown against the other end of the carriage. Then before I could understand, reflect, or think of anything, I received five or six terrible cuffs, and a perfect hail of sharp blows from her fist, coming from every direction. I could not avoid them being quite unable to distinguish anything in the dense darkness in which this encounter took place.

I put up my hands endeavoring to seize her by the arm, but in vain. At last, not knowing what to do, I turned round, leaving only my shoulders exposed to her furious attack and hiding my head in a corner of the cushions. She appeared to understand,

from the sound of the blows, perhaps, my despairing maneuver, and suddenly ceased hitting me. After a few moments she regained her corner, where she sat sobbing and crying most bitterly for nearly an hour.

I got back into my seat, much troubled and terribly ashamed. I wanted to say something to her, but what could be said? To excuse myself would be stupid. What could anyone have said? Nothing. By and by, she began to cry more softly, every now and then heaving deep sighs, which pierced my very heart. I longed to console her, to embrace her as one would an unhappy child, and ask her forgiveness on my knees. But I dared not.

Such situations are intensely trying!

By degrees she became calm, and each of us sat in a corner silent and immovable, while the stage jogged on, only stopping now and then to change horses. When the bright rays of the stable-lantern fell on us we would both hastily close our eyes, lest we should see each other's faces.

Then we would start off again; and all the time the fragrant perfumed air of the Corsican mountains caressed our cheeks and lips, stimulating us like wine.

"Sacristi!" thought I, "What a charming journey this would be if—if my companion were not such a fool!"

But daylight slowly crept in on us, the pale day of early dawn. I glanced at my neighbor; she appeared to be asleep. At length the sun rose over the mountains irradiating an immense blue gulf, surrounded by huge hills topped with granite. On the shore of this gulf, still bathed in shadow, I could see

the silvery gleam of a white town, nestling close to the water's edge.

Soon the lady roused herself and opened her eyes, which were quite red; then her lips parted in a yawn, as though she had been sleeping a long time.

Looking up, she flushed and asked falteringly, "Shall we soon be there?"

"Yes, Madame, in less than an hour," I replied.

"It is very fatiguing to pass the night traveling," she said, looking away distantly.

"Yes," I assented, "it makes one ache all over."

"Above all, after a crossing."

"Yes, indeed."

"Is that Ajaccio before us?"

"Yes, Madame."

"I wish we had arrived."

"I can understand that," I replied.

Her voice sounded slightly troubled, her manner was embarrassed, and her glance shy. Nevertheless she seemed to have forgotten everything!

How I admired her. What diplomatists these women are!

We reached our destination in about an hour. A great dragoon with the figure of a Hercules was standing in front of the coach-office, waving a handkerchief as he saw the stage approaching. No sooner had it stopped than the young woman sprang eagerly into his arms and kissed him twenty times at least, crying:

"You are well? How I have longed to see you again."

My trunk had already been taken out and I was discreetly withdrawing, when she called to me:

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AFTER THE ORIGINAL DRAWING BY V. ROTTEMBOURG.

"'Darling!' she cried, 'do thank this gentleman. He has been charming to me.'"

(See page 57)

"Oh, Monsieur, you are not going without wishing me good-bye!"

"Madame," I murmured, "I shall be intruding."

Then she turned to her husband, "Darling, do thank this gentleman. He has been charming to me during the whole journey. He even offered me a place in the stage which he had taken for himself. I have been most fortunate in meeting such a pleasant companion."

Her husband held out his hand, and thanked me warmly. The young woman looked at me curiously. As for myself, I must have looked very cheap.

THE CARTERS' WENCH

THE driver, who had jumped from his box, was now walking slowly by the side of his thin horses, waking them up every moment by a cut of the whip or a coarse oath. He pointed to the top of the hill, where the windows of a solitary house, although it was very late and quite dark, were shining like yellow lamps, and said to me:

"One gets good liquor there, Monsieur, and well served, by George!"

His eyes flashed in his thin, sunburned face, which was of a deep brickdust color, and he smacked his lips like a drunkard, at the remembrance of a bottle of prime liquor that he has lately imbibed. Then drawing himself up in his blouse he shivered like an ox, when it is sharply pricked with the goad.

"Yes—well served by a wench who will turn your head for you before you have tilted your elbow and drunk a glass!"

The moon was rising behind the snow-covered mountain peaks, reddening them to blood with its

rays, and tingeing the dark, broken clouds, which whirled and floated about the summits, reminding the traveler of some terrible Medusa's head. The gloomy plains of Capsir, which are traversed by torrents, extensive meadows in which undefined forms were moving about, fields of rye like huge golden table-covers, and here and there wretched villages and broad sheets of water, into which the stars gazed in melancholy manner, opened out to the view. Damp gusts of wind swept along the road, bringing a strong smell of hay, of resin, and of unknown flowers with them, and erratic masses of rock, which were scattered on the surface like huge boundary stones, presented spectral outlines.

The driver pulled his broad-brimmed felt hat over his eyes, twirled his large mustache, and said in an obsequious voice:

"Does Monsieur wish to stop here? This is the place!"

It was a wretched, wayside public-house, with a reddish slate roof, that looked as if it were suffering from leprosy. Before the door there stood three wagons drawn by mules and loaded with huge stems of trees, which took up nearly the whole of the road. The animals, who were used to halting there, were dozing, and their heavy loads exhaled the smell of a pillaged forest.

Inside, three wagoners, one of whom was an old man, while the other two were young, were sitting in front of the fire, which crackled loudly. There were bottles and glasses on a large round table by their side, and they were singing and laughing boisterously. A woman with large round hips, and with

a lace cap pinned on to her hair, in the Catalan fashion, who looked strong and bold, had a certain amount of gracefulness about her, and a pretty, but untidy head, was urging them to undo the strings of their great leather purses. She replied to their somewhat indelicate jokes in a shrill voice, as she sat on the knee of the youngest and allowed him to kiss her and caress her without any signs of shame.

The coachman pushed open the door like a man who knows that he is at home.

"Good evening, Glaizette, and everybody; there is room for two more, I suppose?"

The wagoners did not speak, but looked at us furtively and angrily, like dogs whose food has been taken from them, and who show their teeth, ready to bite. The girl shrugged her shoulders, and looked into their eyes like some female wild-beast tamer; then she asked us with a strange smile:

"What am I to get you?"

"Two glasses of cognac and the best you have in the cupboard, Glaizette," the coachman replied, rolling a cigarette,

While she was uncorking the bottle I noticed how green her eyeballs were; it was a fascinating, tempting green, like the hue of the great green grasshopper. I saw, too, how small her hands were, which showed that she did not use them much. Her teeth were very white, and her voice, which was rather rough, though cooing, had a cruel, and at the same time a coaxing, sound. I fancied I saw her, as in a vision, reclining triumphantly on a couch, indifferent to the fights which were going on about her, always waiting, longing for him who would prove himself

the stronger and come out victorious. She was, in short, a hospitable dispenser of love, by the side of that difficult, stony road, who opened her arms to poor men, and made them forget everything in the profusion of her kisses. She probably knew secrets which nobody in the world besides herself should know, secrets which her sealed lips would carry away inviolate to the other world. She could never yet have loved, and would never really love, because she was vowed to passing kisses, which are so soon forgotten.

I was anxious to escape from her as soon as possible; to fly from the spell of her pale, green eyes, and her mouth that bestowed caresses from pure charity, to feel her beautiful white hands no longer so near me. So I threw her a piece of gold and made my escape without saying a word, without waiting for any change, and without even wishing her good night, for I felt the caress of her smile, and the disdainful restlessness of her looks.

The carriage started off at a gallop to Formiguères, amid a furious jingling of bells. I could not sleep any more; I wanted to know where that woman came from, but I was ashamed to ask the driver, or to show any interest in such a creature. But when he began to talk, as we were going up another hill, divining my sweet thoughts, he told me all he knew about Glaizette. I listened to him with the attention of a child, to whom somebody is telling some wonderful fairy tale.

She came from Fontpédrouze, a muleteers' village, where the men spend their time in drinking and gambling at the inn, when they are not traveling on

the highroads with their mules. The women do all the field work, carry the heaviest loads on their back, and lead a life of pain and misery.

Her father kept an inn, and the girl grew up very happily. She was courted before she was fifteen, and was so coquettish that she was generally found in front of her looking-glass, smiling at her own beauty, arranging her hair, and trying to make herself like a young lady on the *prado*. Now as none of the family knew how to keep a half-penny, but spent more than they earned, resembling cracked jugs, from which the water escapes drop by drop, they found themselves ruined one fine day, just as if they had been at the bottom of a blind alley. So on the Feast of our Lady of Succor, when people go on a pilgrimage to Font Romea, and the villages are consequently deserted, the innkeeper set fire to the house. The crime was discovered through La Glaizette, who could not make up her mind to leave the looking-glass with which her room was adorned behind her, and so had carried it off under her petticoat.

The parents were sentenced to many years' imprisonment. Compelled to live the best way she could, the girl became a servant, passed from hand to hand, inherited some property from an old farmer whom she had caught as you catch a thrush on a twig covered with bird-lime, and with the money had built this public-house on the new road which was being built across the Capsir.

"A regular bad one, Monsieur," said the coachman in conclusion, "a vixen such as one does not see now in the worst garrison towns, one who would

open the door to the whole confraternity, yet not at all avaricious, and thoroughly honest."

I interrupted him in spite of myself, as if his words had pained me. I thought of those pale green eyes, those magic eyes, eyes to be dreamed about, which were the color of grasshoppers. I looked for them, and saw them in the darkness; they danced before me like phosphorescent lights, and I would have given the whole contents of my purse to that man if he would only have been silent and have urged his horses on to full speed, so that their mad gallop might carry me off quickly, quickly and further, continually further from that girl.

RUST

DURING nearly his whole life, Baron de Coutelier had had an insatiable love for sport. He went out every day from morning till night with the greatest ardor, in summer and winter, spring and autumn, and on the marshes when it was close time on the plains and in the woods. He shot, he hunted, he coursed, he ferreted; he spoke of nothing but shooting and hunting, he dreamed of it, and continually repeated:

"How miserable any man must be who does not care for sport!"

And now that he was past fifty, he was well, robust, stout, and vigorous, though rather bald. He kept his mustache cut quite short, so that it might not cover his lips and interfere with his blowing the horn.

He was never called by anything but his first Christian name, Monsieur Hector, but his full name was Baron Hector Contran de Coutelier, and he lived at a small manor house which he had inherited in

the middle of the woods. Though he knew all the nobility of the department, and met its male representatives out shooting and hunting, he only regularly visited one family, the Courvilles, who were very pleasant neighbors and had been allied to his race for centuries. In their house he was liked and taken the greatest care of, and he used to say: "If I were not a sportsman, I should like to be here always."

Monsieur de Courville had been his friend and comrade from childhood, and lived quietly as a gentleman farmer with his wife, daughter, and son-in-law, Monsieur de Darnetot, who did nothing, under the pretext of being devoted to historical studies.

Baron de Coutelier often went and dined with his friends, as much with the object of telling them of the shots he had made as of anything else. He had long stories about dogs and ferrets, of which he spoke as if they were persons of note, whom he knew very well. He analyzed them, and explained their thoughts and intentions:

"When Medor saw that the corncrake was leading him such a dance, he said to himself: 'Wait a bit, my friend, we will have a joke.' And then, with a jerk of the head to me, to make me go into the corner of the clover field, he began to quarter the sloping ground, noisily, brushing through the clover to drive the bird into a corner from which it could not escape.

"Everything happened as he had foreseen. Suddenly, the corncrake found itself on the borders of the clover, and it could not go any further without showing itself; Medor stood and pointed, half looking round, but at a sign from me, he drew up to it,

flushed the corncrake, and *Bang!* down it came, and Medor, as he brought it to me, wagged his tail, as much as to say: 'How about that, Monsieur Hector?'"

Courville, Darnetot, and the two ladies laughed very heartily at those picturesque descriptions into which the Baron threw his whole heart. He grew animated, moved his arms about, and gesticulated with his whole body; and when he described the death of anything he had killed, he gave a loud laugh, and said:

"Was not that a good shot?"

As soon as they began to speak about anything else, he left off listening, and hummed a hunting song, or a few notes to imitate a hunting horn, to himself.

He had only lived for field sports, and was growing old, without thinking about it, or guessing it, when he had a severe attack of rheumatism, was confined to his bed for two months, and nearly died of grief and weariness.

As he kept no female servant, for an old footman did all the cooking, he could not get any hot poultices, nor could he have any of those little attentions that an invalid requires. His gamekeeper was his sick nurse, and as the servant found the time hung just as heavily on his hands as it did on his master's, he slept nearly all day and all night in an easy-chair, while the Baron was swearing and flying into a rage between the sheets.

The ladies of the De Courville family came to see him occasionally, and those were hours of calm and comfort for him. They prepared his herb tea, at-

tended to the fire, served him his breakfast up daintily, by the side of his bed, and when they were going again, he used to say:

"By Jove! You ought to come here altogether," which made them laugh heartily.

When he was getting better, and was beginning to go out shooting again, he went to dine with his friends one evening; but he was not at all in his usual spirits. He was tormented by one continual fear—that he might have another attack before shooting began. When he was taking his leave at night, and the women were wrapping him up in a shawl, and tying a silk handkerchief round his neck, which he allowed to be done for the first time in his life, he said in a disconsolate voice:

"If it goes on like this, I shall be done for."

As soon as he had gone, Madame Darnetot said to her mother:

"We ought to try and get the Baron married."

They all raised their hands at the proposal. How was it that they had never thought of it before? During the rest of the evening they discussed the widows whom they knew, and their choice fell on a woman of forty, who was still pretty, fairly rich, very good-tempered, and in excellent health. Her name was Madame Berthe Vilers, and, accordingly, she was invited to spend a month at the château. She was very dull at home, and was very glad to come; she was lively and active, and Monsieur de Coutelier took her fancy immediately. She amused herself with him as if he had been a living toy, and spent hours in asking him slyly about the sentiments of rabbits and the machinations of foxes. He gravely distinguished

between the various ways of looking at things which different animals had, and ascribed plans and subtle arguments to them, just as he did to men of his acquaintance.

The attention she paid him delighted him, and one evening, to show his esteem for her, he asked her to go out shooting with him, which he had never done to any woman before, and the invitation appeared so funny to her that she accepted it.

It was quite an amusement for them to fit her out; everybody offered her something, and she came out in a sort of short riding habit, with boots and men's breeches, a short petticoat, a velvet jacket, which was too tight for her across the chest, and a huntsman's black velvet cap.

The Baron seemed as excited as if he were going to fire his first shot. He minutely explained to her the direction of the wind, and how different dogs worked. Then he took her into a field, and followed her as anxiously as a nurse does her charge when it tries to walk for the first time.

Medor soon made a point, and stopped with his tail out stiff, and one paw up, and the Baron standing behind his pupil, was trembling like a leaf, and whispered:

"Look out, they are par — par — partridges." And almost before he had finished, there was a loud *whirr — whirr*, and a covey of large birds flew up in the air with a tremendous noise.

Madame Vilers was startled, shut her eyes, fired off both barrels and staggered at the recoil of the gun. When she had recovered her self-possession, she saw that the Baron was dancing about like a

madman, and that Medor was bringing back the first of the two partridges which she had killed.

From that day, Monsieur de Coutelier was in love with her, and used to say, raising his eyes: "What a woman!" He went to see them every evening now, and talked about shooting.

One day, Monsieur de Courville, who was walking part of the way with him, asked him, suddenly:

"Why don't you marry her?"

The Baron was altogether taken by surprise, and said:

"What? I? Marry her? Well—really—"

And he said no more for a while, but then, suddenly shaking hands with his companion, he said:

"Good-bye, my friend," and quickly disappeared in the darkness.

He did not go again for three days, but when he reappeared, he was pale from thinking the matter over, and graver than usual. Taking Monsieur de Courville aside, he said:

"That was a capital idea of yours; try and persuade her to accept me, for you might say that a woman of her sort was made for me, and you and I shall be able to have some sort of sport together, all the year round."

As Monsieur de Courville felt certain that his friend would not meet with a refusal, he replied:

"Propose to her, immediately, my dear fellow—or would you rather that I did it for you?"

But the Baron grew suddenly nervous, and said, with some hesitation:

"No, no—I must go to Paris for—for a few days. As soon as I come back, I will give you a definite

answer." No other explanation was forthcoming, and he started the next morning.

He made a long stay. One, two, three weeks passed, but Monsieur de Coutelier did not return, and the Courvilles, who were surprised and uneasy, did not know what to say to their friend, whom they had informed of the Baron's wishes. Every other day they sent to his house for news of him, but none of his servants had had a line.

But one evening, while Madame Vilers was singing and accompanying herself on the piano, a servant came with a mysterious air, and told Monsieur de Courville that a gentleman wanted to see him. It was the Baron, in a traveling suit, looking much altered and older. As soon as he saw his old friend, he seized both his hands, and said, in a somewhat tired voice: "I have just returned, my dear friend, and I have come to you immediately; I am thoroughly tired."

Then he hesitated in visible embarrassment, and presently said:

"I wished to tell you immediately that that business — you know what I mean — must come to nothing."

Monsieur de Courville looked at him in stupefaction. "Must come to nothing? Why?"

"Oh! Do not ask me, please; it would be too painful for me to tell you; but you may rest assured that I am acting like an honorable man. I cannot — I have no right — no right, you understand, to marry this lady, and I will wait until she has gone before I come here again; it would be too painful for me to see her. Good-bye." And he absolutely ran away

The whole family deliberated and discussed the matter, surmising a thousand things. The conclusion they came to was that the Baron's past life concealed some great mystery, that, perhaps, he had natural children, or some connection of long standing. At any rate, the matter seemed serious, and to avoid any difficult complications, they adroitly informed Madame Vilers of the state of affairs, who returned home just as much of a widow as she had come.

Three months more passed, when one evening, when he had dined rather too well, and was rather unsteady on his legs, Monsieur de Coutelier, while smoking a pipe with Monsieur de Courville, said to him:

"You would really pity me, if you only knew how continually I am thinking about your friend."

But the other, who had been rather vexed at the Baron's behavior in the circumstances, told him exactly what he thought of him:

"By Jove, my good friend, when a man has any secrets in his existence, as you have, he does not make advances to a woman immediately, as you did, for you must surely have foreseen the reason why you had to draw back."

The Baron left off smoking in some confusion.

"Yes and no; at any rate, I could not have believed what actually happened."

Whereupon Monsieur de Courville lost his patience, and replied:

"One ought to foresee everything."

But Monsieur de Coutelier replied in a low voice, in case anybody should be listening: "I see that I have hurt your feelings, and will tell you everything,

so that you may forgive me. You know that for twenty years, I have lived only for sport; I care for nothing else, and think about nothing else. Consequently, when I was on the point of undertaking certain obligations with regard to this lady, I felt some scruples of conscience. Since I have given up the habit of—of love, there, I have not known whether I was still capable of—of—you know what I mean. Just think! It is exactly sixteen years since I—you understand what I mean. In this neighborhood, it is not easy to—you know. And then, I had other things to do. I prefer to rove and shoot, and so, before entering into an engagement before the Mayor* and the priest, I was frightened. I said to myself: 'Confound it; suppose I—' well, you know an honorable man always keeps his engagements, and in this case, I was undertaking sacred duties with regard to this lady. So to feel sure, I made up my mind to go and spend a week in Paris.

"At the end of that time, nothing, absolutely nothing occurred. It was always the same. I waited for a fortnight, three weeks, continually hoping. In the restaurants, I ate a number of highly seasoned dishes, which upset my stomach, and—and it was still the same thing. You will, therefore, understand, that, in such circumstances, and having assured myself of the fact, the only thing I could do was to withdraw; and I did so."

Monsieur de Courville had to struggle very hard not to laugh, and he shook hands with the Baron, saying:

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* Civil marriage is obligatory in France, whether a religious ceremony takes place or not.

"I am very sorry for you," and accompanied him half-way home.

When he got back, and was alone with his wife, he told her everything, nearly choking with laughter. She, however, did not laugh, but listened very attentively, and when her husband had finished, she said, very seriously:

"The Baron is a fool, my dear; he was frightened, that is all. I will write and ask Berthe to come back here as soon as possible."

And when Monsieur de Courville observed that their friend had made such long and useless attempts, she merely said:

"Nonsense! When a man loves his wife, you know, that sort of thing adjusts itself to the situation."

And Monsieur de Courville made no reply, as he felt rather confused himself.

THE CARNIVAL OF LOVE

THE Princess Léonie was one of those beautiful, brilliant enigmas who irresistibly allure everyone like a sphinx. She was young, charming, and singularly lovely, and understood how to heighten her charms by carefully-chosen robes. She was a grand dame of the right stamp, and very intellectual into the bargain, which is not the case with all aristocratic ladies. She also took great interest in art and literature, and it was said that she patronized one of our poets in a manner worthy of the Medicis, and that she strewed the beautiful roses of continual feminine sympathy upon his thorny path. All this was evident to everybody, and had nothing strange about it, but the world yearned to know the history of the woman, and to look into the depths of her soul, and because it could not do this in Princess Léonie's case, it deemed it very strange.

No one could read her face, always beautiful, always cheerful, and always the same; no one could

fathom those large, dark, unfathomable eyes, which hid their secrets under the undisturbed serenity of majestic repose, like a mountain lake, whose waters seem black on account of their depth. For everybody agreed that the beautiful princess had her secrets, interesting and precious secrets, too, like other ladies of our fashionable world.

Most people looked upon her as a flirt without heart and without blood, and asserted that she was virtuous only because the power of loving was denied her, and that she took all the more pleasure in seeing that she was loved—that she set her toils and enticed her victims, until they surrendered from discretion at her feet, and then left them to their fate and hurried off in pursuit of some fresh game.

Others declared that the Princess had met with romances in life, and was still meeting with them, but, like a thorough Messalina, knew how to conceal her adventures as cleverly as that French queen who had everyone of her lovers thrown into the cold waters of the Seine as soon as he quitted her soft, warm arms. She was thus described to Count Otto F., a handsome cavalry officer, who had made the acquaintance of the siren at that fashionable watering-place, Karlsbad, and had fallen deeply in love with her.

Even before he had been introduced to her, the Princess had already exchanged fiery, encouraging glances with him, and when a brother officer took him to call on her, she welcomed him with a smile which appeared to promise him happiness. After he had paid his court to her for a month, he did not

seem to have made any progress, and as she possessed in a high degree the skill of being able to avoid even the shortest private interviews, it appeared as if matters would go no further than that delightful anticipation.

Night after night, the enamored young officer walked along the garden fence of her villa as close to her windows as possible, without being noticed by anyone; but at last fortune seemed to favor him. The moon, which was nearly at the full, was shining brightly, and in its silvery light he saw a tall, female figure, with large plaits round her head, coming along the gravel path. He stood still, as he thought he recognized the Princess, but as she came nearer he saw a pretty girl, whom he did not know, and who came up to the railings and said to him with a smile: "What can I do for you, Count?" mentioning his name.

"You seem to know me, Fräulein."*

"Oh! I am only the Princess's lady's maid."

"But you could do me a great favor."

"How?" she asked quickly.

"You might give the Princess a letter."

"I should not venture to do that," the girl replied with a peculiar, half-mocking, half-pitying smile, and with a deep courtesy, she disappeared behind the raspberry bushes which formed a hedge along the fence.

The next morning, as the Count, with several other ladies and gentlemen, was accompanying the

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* Young lady; always used, like the French *Mademoiselle*, in addressing unmarried ladies.

Princess home from the pump-room, the fair coquette let her pocket handkerchief fall just outside her house. The young officer took this for a hint. So he picked it up, concealed the letter that he had written, which he always kept about him so as to be prepared for any event, in the folds of the soft cambric, and gave it back to the Princess, who quickly put it into her pocket. This seemed to him to be a good augury, and, in fact, in the course of a few hours he received a note in disguised handwriting, by post, in which his bold wooing was graciously entertained, and an appointment made for the same night in the pavilion of the Princess's villa.

The happiness of the enamored young officer knew no bounds; he kissed the letter a hundred times, thanked the Princess when he met her in the afternoon where the band was playing by his animated looks, which she either did not or would not understand, and at night was standing an hour before the appointed time behind the wall at the bottom of the garden.

When the church clock struck eleven he climbed over it and jumped on to the ground on the other side, looking about him carefully. Then he went up to the small, whitewashed summer-house, where the Princess had promised to meet him, on tiptoe. He found the door ajar, went in, and at the same moment he felt two soft arms thrown round him.

"Is it you, Princess?" he asked, in a whisper, for the pavilion was in total darkness, as the Venetian blinds were drawn.

"Yes, Count, it is I."

"How cruel!"

"I love you, but I am obliged to conceal my passion under the mask of coldness because of my social position."

As she said this, the enamored woman, who was trembling on his breast with excitement, drew him on to a couch that occupied one side of the pavilion, and began to kiss him ardently. The lovers spent two blissful hours in delightful conversation and intoxicating pleasures; then she bade him farewell, and told him to remain where he was until she had gone back to the house. He obeyed her, but could not resist looking at her through the Venetian blinds. He saw her tall, slim figure as she went along the gravel path with an undulating walk. She wore a white burnous, which he recognized as having seen in the pump-room; her soft, black hair fell down over her shoulders, and before she disappeared into the villa she halted a moment and looked back, but he could not see her face, as she wore a thick veil.

When Count F. met the Princess the next morning in company with other ladies, where the band was playing, she showed an amount of unconstraint that confused him. While she was joking in the most unembarrassed manner, he turned crimson and stammered out such a lot of nonsense that the ladies noticed it and made him the target for their wit. None of them was bolder or more confident in their attacks on him than the Princess, so that at last he looked upon the woman who concealed so much passion in her breast, and yet could command herself so thoroughly, as a kind of miracle, and said to himself:

"The world is right; woman is a riddle!"

The Princess remained there for some weeks longer, always maintaining the same polite and friendly, but cool and sometimes ironical, demeanor toward him. He easily endured being looked upon as her unfortunate adorer by the world, for at least every other day a small, scented note, stamped with her arms and signed "Léonie," summoned him to the pavilion, and there he enjoyed the full, delightful possession of the beautiful woman. It struck him, however, as strange that she would never let him see her face. Her head was always covered with a thick, black veil, through which he could see her eyes, which sparkled with love, glistening; he passed his fingers through her hair, he saw her well-known dresses, and once he succeeded in getting possession of one of her pocket handkerchiefs, on which the name Léonie and the princely coronet were magnificently embroidered.

When she returned to Vienna for the winter, a note from her invited him to follow her there, and as he had indefinite leave of absence from his regiment, he could obey the commands of his divinity. As soon as he arrived there he received another note, which forbade him to go to her house, but promised him a speedy meeting in his rooms. So the young officer had the furniture elegantly renovated, and looked forward to a visit from the beautiful woman with all a lover's impatience.

At last she came, wrapped in a magnificent cloak of green velvet, trimmed with ermine, but still thickly veiled. Before she came in she made it a condition that the room in which he received her should be quite dark, and after he had put out all the lights

she threw off her fur, and her coldness gave way to the most impetuous tenderness.

"What is the reason that you will never allow me to see your dear, beautiful face?" asked the Count.

"It is a whim or mine, and I suppose I have the right to indulge in whims," she said hastily.

"But I so long once more to see your splendid figure and your lovely face in full daylight," the Count continued.

"Very well then, you shall see me at the opera this evening."

She left him at six o'clock, after stopping barely an hour with him, and as soon as her carriage had driven off he dressed and went to the opera. During the overture he saw the Princess enter her box, looking dazzlingly beautiful. She was wearing the same green velvet cloak, trimmed with ermine, that he had had in his hands a short time before, but almost immediately let it fall from her shoulders, and showed a bust worthy of the Goddess of Love. She spoke with her husband with much animation, and smiled with her usual cold smile, though she did not give her adorer even a passing look. But, in spite of this, he felt the happiest of mortals.

In Vienna, however, the Count was not as fortunate as he had been at Karlsbad, where he had first met her, for his beautiful mistress only came to see him once a week. Often she only stopped a short time with him, and once nearly six weeks passed without her favoring him at all. But she did not even make any excuse for remaining away. Just then, however, Léonie's husband accidentally made

the young officer's acquaintance at the Jockey Club, took a fancy to him, and asked him to go and see him at his house.

When he called and found the Princess alone, his heart felt as if it would burst with pleasure, and seizing her hand, he pressed it ardently to her lips.

"What are you doing, Count?" she said, drawing back. "You are behaving very strangely."

"We are alone," the young officer whispered, "so why this mask of innocence? Your cruelty is driving me mad, for it is six weeks since you came to see me last."

"I certainly think you are out of your mind," the Princess replied, with every sign of the highest indignation, and hastily left the drawing-room. Nothing else remained for the Count but to do the same thing, but his mind was in a perfect whirl, and he was quite incapable of explaining to himself the Princess's enigmatical behavior. He dined at an hotel with some friends, and when he got home he found a note in which the Princess begged him to pardon her, and promised to justify her conduct, for which purpose she would see him at eight o'clock that evening.

Scarcely, however, had he read her note, when two of his brother-officers came to see him, and asked him, with well-simulated anxiety, whether he were ill. When he said that he was perfectly well, one of them continued, laughing:

"Then please explain the occurrence that is in everybody's mouth to-day, in which you play such a comical part."

"I, a comical part?" the Count shouted.

"Well, is it not very comical when you call on a lady like Princess Léonie, whom you do not know, to upbraid her for her cruelty, and most unceremoniously call her *thou*."*

This was too much. Count F. might pardon the Princess for pretending not to know him in society, but that she should make him a common laughing-stock nearly drove him mad.

"If I call the Princess *thou*," he exclaimed, "it is because I have the right to do so, as I will prove."

His comrades shrugged their shoulders, but he asked them to come again punctually at seven o'clock, and then he made his preparations.

At eight o'clock his divinity made her appearance, still thickly veiled, but on this occasion wearing a valuable sable cloak. As usual, Count F. took her into the dark room and locked the outer door; then he opened that which led into his bedroom, and his two friends came in, each with a candle in his hand. The lady in the sable cloak cried out in terror when Count F. pulled off her veil. Then it was his turn to be surprised, for it was not Princess Léonie who stood before him, but her pretty maid, who, now she was discovered, confessed that love had driven her to assume her mistress's part, in which she had succeeded perfectly, on account of the similarity of their figure, eyes, and hair. She had found the Count's letter in the Princess's pocket handkerchief when they were at Karlsbad and had answered it, she had made him happy, and had heightened the illusion which

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* In Germany, *du*, *thou*, is used only between near relations, lovers, very intimate friends, and to children, servants, etc.

her figure gave rise to by borrowing the Princess's dresses.

Of course the Count was heartily ridiculed and turned his back on Vienna hastily that same evening. The pretty maid also disappeared soon after the catastrophe, and by this means escaped from her mistress's well-merited anger; for it turned out that that gallant little individual had already played the part of her mistress more than once, and had made all those hopeless adorers of the Princess who had found favor in her own eyes happy in her stead.

Thus was solved the enigma which Princess Leonie seemed to have proposed to the world.

THE RENDEZVOUS

ALTHOUGH she had her bonnet and jacket on, with a black veil over her face, and another in her pocket, which would be put on over the other as soon as she had got into a cab, she was tapping the top of her little boot with the point of her parasol, and remained sitting in her room, unable to make up her mind to keep this appointment.

And yet how many times within the last two years had she dressed herself thus, when she knew that her husband would be on the Stock Exchange, in order to go to the bachelor chambers of handsome Viscount de Martelet.

The clock behind her was ticking loudly, a book which she had half read was lying open on a little rosewood writing-table, between the windows, and a strong sweet smell of violets from two bunches in Dresden china vases mingled with a vague smell of verbena which came through the half-open door of her dressing-room.

The clock struck three, she rose up from her chair, turned round to look at herself in the glass

and smiled. "He is already waiting for me, and will be getting tired."

Then she left the room, told her footman that she would be back in an hour, at the latest — which was a lie — went downstairs, and ventured into the street on foot.

It was toward the end of May, that delightful time of the year when spring seems to be besieging Paris, flowing over its roofs, invading its houses through their walls, and making the city look gay, shedding brightness over its granite *façades*, the asphalt of its pavements, the stones on its streets, bathing and intoxicating it with new life, like a forest putting on its spring vesture.

Madame Haggan went a few steps to the right, intending, as usual, to go along the Parade Provence, where she would hail a cab. But the soft air, that feeling of summer which penetrates our breasts on some days, now took possession of her so suddenly that she changed her mind and went down the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, without knowing why, but vaguely attracted by a desire to see the trees in the Place de la Trinité.

"He may just wait ten minutes longer for me," she said to herself. And the idea pleased her as she walked slowly through the crowd. She fancied that she saw him growing impatient, looking at the clock, opening the window, listening at the door, sitting down for a few moments, getting up again, not daring to smoke, as she had forbidden him to do so when she was coming to him, and throwing despairing looks at his box of cigarettes.

She walked slowly, interested in what she saw,

the shops and the people she met, walking slower and slower, and so little eager to get to her destination, that she only sought for some pretext for stopping. At the end of the street, in the little square, the green lawns attracted her so much that she went in, took a chair, and, sitting down, watched the hands of the clock as they moved.

Just then, the half hour struck, and her heart beat with pleasure when she heard the chimes. She had gained half-an-hour, then it would take her a quarter of an hour to reach the Rue de Miromesnil, and a few minutes more in strolling along—an hour! a whole hour saved from her rendezvous! She would not stop three-quarters of an hour, and that business would be finished once more.

She disliked going there as a patient dislikes going to the dentist. She had an intolerable recollection of all their past meetings, one a week on an average, for the last two years; and the thought that another was to take place immediately made her shiver with misery from head to foot. Not that it was exactly painful, like a visit to the dentist, but it was wearisome, so wearisome, so complicated, so long, so unpleasant, that anything, even a visit to the dentist, would have seemed preferable to her.

She went on, however, but very slowly, stopping, sitting down, going hither and thither, but she went. Oh! how she would have liked to miss this meeting, but she had left the unhappy Viscount in the lurch, twice running, during the last month, and she did not dare to do it again so soon. Why did she go to see him? Oh! why? Because she had acquired the habit of doing it, and had no reason to

give poor Martelet when he wanted to know *the why!* Why had she begun it? Why? She did not know herself, any longer. Had she been in love with him? Very possibly! Not very much, but a little, a long time ago! He was very nice, much sought after, perfectly dressed, most courteous, and after the first glance, he was a perfect lover for a fashionable woman.

He had courted her for three months—the normal period, an honorable strife and sufficient resistance—and then she had consented. What emotion, what nervousness, what terrible, delightful fear, attended that first meeting in his small, ground-floor bachelor rooms, in the Rue de Miromesnil. Her heart? What did her little heart of a woman who had been seduced, vanquished, conquered, feel when she for the first time entered the door of the house which was her nightmare? She really did not know! She had quite forgotten. One remembers a fact, a date, a thing, but one hardly remembers, after the lapse of two years, what an emotion, which soon vanished because it was very slight, was like. But she had certainly not forgotten the others, that rosary of meetings, that road to the cross of love and its stations, which were so monotonous, so fatiguing, so similar to each other, that she felt nauseated.

The very cabs were not like the other cabs which you use for ordinary purposes! Certainly, the cabmen guessed. She felt sure of it, by the very way they looked at her, and the eyes of these Paris cabmen are terrible! When you realize that these jehus constantly identify in the Courts of Justice, after a lapse of several years, the faces of criminals whom they have

only driven once, in the middle of the night, from some street or other to a railway station, and that they carry daily almost as many passengers as there are hours in the day, and that their memory is good enough for them to declare: "That is the man whom I took up in the Rue des Martyrs, and put down at the Lyons Railway Station, at 12 o'clock at night, on July 10, last year!" Is it not terrible to risk what a young woman risks when she is going to meet her lover, and has to trust her reputation to the first cabman she meets? In two years she had employed at least one hundred or more of them in that drive to the Rue de Miromesnil, reckoning only one a week. They were so many witnesses, who might appear against her at a critical moment.

As soon as she was in the cab, she took another veil, as thick and dark as a domino mask, out of her pocket, and put it on. That hid her face, but what about the rest, her dress, her bonnet, and her parasol? They might be remarked — they might, in fact, have been seen already. Oh! What misery she endured in this Rue de Miromesnil! She thought she recognized the foot-passengers, the servants, everybody, and almost before the cab had stopped, she jumped out and ran past the porter who was standing outside his lodge. He must know everything, everything! — her address, her name, her husband's profession, — everything, for those porters are the most cunning of policemen! For two years she had intended to bribe him, to give him (to throw at him one day as she passed him) a hundred franc bank-note, but she had never dared to do it. She was frightened. What of? She did not know! Of his calling her back, if

he did not understand? Of a scandal? Of a crowd on the stairs? Of being arrested, perhaps? To reach the Viscount's door, she had only to ascend half a flight of stairs, but it seemed to her as high as the tower of Saint Jacques's Church.

As soon as she had reached the vestibule, she felt as if she were caught in a trap. The slightest noise before or behind her nearly made her faint. It was impossible for her to go back, because of that porter who barred her retreat; and if anyone came down at that moment she would not dare to ring at Martelet's door, but would pass it as if she had been going elsewhere! She would have gone up, and up, and up! She would have mounted forty flights of stairs! Then, when everything seemed quiet again down below, she would run down feeling terribly frightened, lest she should not recognize the apartment.

He would be there in a velvet coat lined with silk, very stylish, but rather ridiculous, and for two years he had never altered his manner of receiving her, not in a single movement! As soon as he had shut the door he used to say: "Let me kiss your hands, my dear, dear friend!" Then he would follow her into the room, where with closed shutters and lighted candles, out of refinement, no doubt, he would kneel down before her and look at her from head to foot with an air of adoration. On the first occasion that had been very nice and very successful; but now it seemed to her as if she saw Monsieur Delaunay acting the last scene of a successful piece for the hundred and twentieth time. He might really change his manner of acting. But no, he never altered

his manner of acting, poor fellow. What a good fellow he was, but so commonplace!

And how difficult it was to undress and dress without a lady's maid! Perhaps that was the moment when she began to take a dislike to him. When he said: "Do you want me to help you?" she could have killed him. Certainly there were not many men as awkward as he was, or as uninteresting. Certainly little Baron de Isombal would never have asked her in such a manner: "Do you want me to help you?" He would have helped her, he was so witty, so funny, so active. But there! He was a diplomatist, he had been about in the world, and had roamed everywhere, and, no doubt, had dressed and undressed women arrayed in every possible fashion!

The church clock struck the three-quarters. She looked at the dial, and said: "Oh, how anxious he will be!" and then she quickly left the square. But she had not taken a dozen steps outside, when she found herself face to face with a gentleman who bowed profoundly to her.

"Why! Is that you, Baron?" she said, in surprise. She had just been thinking of him.

"Yes, madame." And then, after asking how she was, he continued: "Do you know that you are the only one—you will allow me to say of my lady friends, I hope—who has not yet seen my Japanese collection?"

"But, my dear Baron, a lady cannot go to a bachelor's room like this."

"What do you mean? That is a great mistake, when it is a question of seeing a rare collection!"

"At any rate, she cannot go alone."

"And why not? I have received a number of ladies alone, only for the sake of seeing my collection! They come every day. Shall I tell you their names? No—I will not do that, one must be discreet, even when one is not guilty. As a matter of fact, there is nothing improper in going to the house of a well-known seriously minded man who holds a certain position, unless one goes for an improper reason!"

"Well, what you have said is certainly correct, at bottom."

"So you will come and see my collection?"

"When?"

"Well, now, immediately."

"Impossible, I am in a hurry."

"Nonsense, you have been sitting in the square for this last half hour."

"You were watching me?"

"I was looking at you."

"But I am sadly in a hurry."

"I am sure you are not. Confess that you are in no particular hurry."

Madame Haggan began to laugh, and said: "Well, no—not very."

A cab passed close by them, and the little Baron called out: "Cabman!" The vehicle stopped, and opening the door, he said: "Get in, madame."

"But, Baron! No, it is impossible to-day; I really cannot."

"Madame, you are acting very imprudently. Get in! People are beginning to look at us, and you will collect a crowd; they will think I am trying to carry you off, and we shall both be arrested; please get in!"

She got in, frightened and bewildered, and he sat down by her side, saying to the cabman: "Rue de Provence."

But suddenly she exclaimed: "Good heavens! I have forgotten a very important telegram; please drive to the nearest telegraph office first of all."

The cab stopped a little farther on, in the Rue de Châteaudun, and she said to the Baron: "Would you kindly get me a fifty-centimes telegraph form? I promised my husband to invite Martelet to dinner to-morrow, and had quite forgotten it."

When the Baron returned and gave her the blue telegraph form, she wrote in a pencil:

"My dear friend, I am not at all well. I am suffering terribly from neuralgia, which keeps me in bed. Impossible to go out. Come and dine to-morrow night, so that I may obtain my pardon.

"JEANNE."

She wetted the gum, fastened it carefully, and addressed it to "Viscount de Martelet, 240 Rue de Miromesnil," and then, giving it back to the Baron, she said: "Now, will you be kind enough to throw this into the telegram box?"

SOLITUDE

WE HAD been dining at the house of a friend, and the dinner had been very gay. After it broke up, one of the party, an old friend, said to me:

"Let us take a stroll in the Champs-Elysées."

I agreed, and we went out, slowly walking up the long promenade, under trees hardly yet covered with leaves. There was hardly a sound, save that confused and constant murmur which Paris makes. A fresh breeze fanned our faces, and a legion of stars were scattered over the black sky like a golden powder.

My companion said to me:

"I do not know why, but I breathe better here at night than anywhere else. It seems to me that my thoughts are enlarged. I have at times, a sort of glimmering in my soul, that makes me believe, for a second, that the divine secret of things is about to be discovered. Then the window is closed, and my vision is ended."

From time to time we saw two shadows glide along the length of the thickets; then we passed a bench, where two people, seated side by side, made but one black spot.

My friend murmured:

"Poor things! They do not inspire me with disgust, but with an immense pity. Among all the mysteries of human life there is one which I have penetrated; our great torment in this existence comes from the fact that we are eternally alone—all our efforts and all our actions are directed toward escaping this solitude. Those two lovers there on the benches in the open air are seeking, as we—as all creatures are seeking, to make their isolation cease, if only for a minute or less. They are living and always will live alone; and we also.

"This is more or less apparent to all of us. For some time I have endured this abominable pain of having understood, of having discovered the frightful solitude in which I live, and I know that nothing can make it cease—nothing. Do you hear? Whatever we may attempt, whatever we may do, whatever may be the misery of our hearts, the appeal of our lips, the clasp of our arms, we are always alone. I have asked you to walk to-night, so that I shall not have to enter my own house, because now I suffer horribly from the solitude of my home. What good does it do me? I speak to you, you listen to me, yet we are both alone, side by side but alone. You understand?

"'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' say the Scriptures. They have the illusion of happiness. They do not feel our solitary misery, they do not wander, as

I do, through life, without contact save of elbows, without joy save the egotistic satisfaction of understanding, of seeing, of divining, and of suffering eternally from the knowledge of our never-ending isolation.

"You think me slightly deranged — do you not? Listen to me. Since I have felt the solitude of my being, it seems to me that I am daily sinking more deeply into a dark vault, whose sides I cannot find, whose end I do not know, and which, perhaps, has no end. I sink without anyone with me, or around me, without any living person making this same gloomy journey. This vault is life. Sometimes I hear noises, voices, cries. I timidly advance toward these confused sounds. But I never know exactly from whom they come; I never meet anybody, I never find another hand in this darkness that surrounds me. Do you understand?

"Some men have occasionally divined this frightful suffering. De Musset has written:

> "'Who comes? Who calls me? No one.
> I am alone. One o'clock strikes.
> O Solitude! O Misery!'

But with him there is only a passing doubt, and not a definite certainty as with me. He was a poet; he peopled life with fantasies, with dreams. He was never really alone. I — I am alone.

"Gustave Flaubert, one of the great unfortunates of this world, because he was one of the great lights, wrote to a friend this despairing phrase: 'We are all in a desert. Nobody understands anybody.'

"No, nobody understands anybody — whatever one thinks, whatever one says, whatever one attempts. Does the earth know what passes in those stars that are hurled like a spark of fire across the firmament — so far that we perceive only the splendor of some? Think of the innumerable army of others lost in infinitude — so near to each other that they form perhaps a whole, as the molecules of a body!

"Well, man does not know what passes in another man any more. We are farther from one another than the stars, and far more isolated, because thought is unfathomable.

"Do you know anything more frightful than this constant contact with beings that we cannot penetrate? We love one another as if we were fettered very close, with extended arms, without succeeding in reaching one another. A torturing need of union hampers us, but all our efforts remain barren, our abandonment useless, our confidences unfruitful, our embraces powerless, our caresses vain. When we wish to join each other, our sudden emotions make us only clash against each other.

"I never feel myself more alone than when I open my heart to some friend, because I then better understand the insuperable obstacle. He is there, my friend; I see his clear eyes above me, but the soul behind them I do not see. He listens to me. What is he thinking? Yes, what *is* he thinking? You do not understand this torment! He hates me, perhaps,— or scorns me,— or mocks me! He reflects upon what I have said; he judges me, he rails at me, he condemns me, and considers me either very mediocre or a fool.

"How am I to know what he thinks? How am I to know whether he loves me as I love him, and what is at work in that little round head? What a mystery is the unknown thought of a being, the hidden and independent thought, that we can neither know nor control, neither command nor conquer!

"And I! I have wished in vain to give myself up entirely; to open all the doors of my soul, and I do not succeed in giving myself up. I still remain in the depth, the very depth, the secret abode of me, where no one can penetrate. No one can discover it, or enter there, because no one resembles me, because no one understands anyone.

"You, at least, understand me at this moment; no: you think I am mad! You examine me; you shrink from me! You ask yourself: 'What's the matter with him to-night?' But if you succeed in seizing, in divining, one day, my horrible and subtle suffering, come to me and say only: 'I have understood you!' and you will make me happy, for a second, perhaps.

"Women make me still more conscious of my solitude. Misery! Misery! How I have suffered through women; because they, more than men, have often given me the illusion of not being alone!

"When one falls in love it seems as though one expands. A superhuman felicity envelops you! Do you know why? Do you know why you feel then this sensation of exceeding happiness? It is simply because one imagines himself no longer alone. Isolation, the abandonment of the human being seems to cease. What an error!

"More tormented even than we, by this eternal

need of love which gnaws at our solitary heart, are women, the great delusion and the dream.

"You know those delicious hours passed face to face with a being with long hair, charming features, and a look that excites us to love. What delirium misleads our mind! What illusion carries us away! Does it not seem that presently our souls shall form but one? But this 'presently' never comes; and, after weeks of waiting, of hope, and of deceptive joy, you find yourself again, one day, more alone than you have ever been before.

"After each kiss, after each embrace, the isolation is increased. And how frightfully one suffers!

"Has not Sully Prudhomme written:

> "'Caresses are only restless transports,
> Fruitless attempts of poor love which essay
> The impossible union of souls by the bodies.'

"And then—good-bye. It is over. One hardly recognizes the woman who has been everything to us for a moment of life, and whose thoughts, intimate and commonplace, undoubtedly, we have never known.

"At the very hour when it would seem, in that mysterious accord of beings, in the complete intermingling of ideas and of aspirations, that you were sounding the very depth of her soul, one word—one word only, sometimes—will reveal your error, will show you, like a flash of lightning in the night, the black abyss between you.

"And still, that which is best in the world is to pass a night near a woman you love, without speaking, completely happy in the sole sensation of her

presence. Ask no more, for two beings have never yet been united.

"As to myself, now, I have closed my soul. I tell no more to anybody what I believe, what I think, or what I love. Knowing myself condemned to this horrible solitude, I look upon things without expressing my opinion. What matter to me opinions, quarrels, pleasures, or beliefs! Being unable to participate with anyone, I have withdrawn myself from all. My invisible self lives unexplored. I have common phrases for answers to the questions of each day, and a smile which says 'Yes,' when I do not even wish to take the trouble of speaking. Do you understand?"

We had traversed the long avenue to the Arc de Triomphe, and had then walked back to the Place de la Concorde, for he had said all this slowly, adding many other things which I no longer remember.

He stopped, and stretching his arm toward the great granite obelisk standing on the pavement of Paris, losing its long Egyptian profile in the night of the stars—an exiled monument, bearing on its side the history of its country written in strange signs—said brusquely: "Look—we are all like that stone."

Then he left me without adding a word. Was he intoxicated? Was he mad? Was he wise? I do not yet know. Sometimes it seems to me that he was right; sometimes it seems to me that he had lost his mind.

THE MAN WITH THE BLUE EYES

MONSIEUR PIERRE AGÉNOR DE VARGNES, the Examining Magistrate, was the exact opposite of a practical joker. He was dignity, staidness, correctness personified. As a sedate man, he was quite incapable of being guilty, even in his dreams, of anything resembling a practical joke, however remotely. I know nobody to whom he could be compared, unless it be the present president* of the French Republic. I think it is useless to carry the analogy any further, and having said thus much, it will be easily understood that a cold shiver passed through me when I heard the following.

At about eight o'clock, one morning last winter, as he was leaving the house to go to the Palais de Justice, his footman handed him a card, on which was printed:

DOCTOR JAMES FERDINAND,
Member of the Academy of Medicine,
PORT-AU-PRINCE,
Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

*Jules Grévy.

At the bottom of the card, there was written in pencil: "From Lady Frogère."

Monsieur de Vargnes knew the lady very well. She was a very agreeable Creole from Haïti, whom he had met in many drawing-rooms, and, on the other hand, though the doctor's name did not awaken any recollections in him, his quality and titles alone demanded the courtesy of an interview, however short it might be. Therefore, although he was in a hurry to get out, Monsieur de Vargnes told the footman to show in his early visitor, but to tell him beforehand that his master was much pressed for time, as he had to go to the Law Courts.

When the doctor came in, in spite of his usual imperturbability, the magistrate could not restrain a movement of surprise, for the doctor presented the strange anomaly of being a negro of the purest, blackest type, with the eyes of a white man — of a man from the North — pale, cold, clear, blue eyes. His surprise increased, when, after a few words of excuse for an untimely visit, the doctor added, with an enigmatical smile:

"My eyes surprise you, do they not? I was sure that they would, and, to tell you the truth, I came here in order that you might look at them well, and never forget them."

His smile, and his words, even more than his smile, seemed to be those of a madman. He spoke very softly, with that childish, lisping voice which is peculiar to negroes, and his mysterious, almost menacing, words consequently sounded all the more as if they were uttered at random by a man bereft of reason. But the doctor's looks, the looks of those

pale, cold, clear, blue eyes, were certainly not those of a madman. They clearly expressed menace, yes, menace, as well as irony, and above all, implacable ferocity, and their glance was like a flash of lightning, which one could never forget.

"I have seen," Monsieur de Vargnes used to say, when speaking about it, "the looks of many murderers, but in none of them have I ever observed such a depth of crime, and of impudent security in crime."

And this impression was so strong that Monsieur de Vargnes thought he was the victim of some hallucination, especially as when he spoke about his eyes, the doctor continued with a smile, and in his most childish accents:

"Of course, Monsieur, you cannot understand what I am saying to you, and I must beg your pardon for it. To-morrow you will receive a letter which will explain it all to you, but, first of all, it was necessary that I should let you have a good, a careful look at my eyes, my eyes, which are myself, my only and true self, as you will see."

With these words, and with a polite bow, the doctor went out, leaving Monsieur de Vargnes extremely surprised, and a prey to doubt. He said to himself: "Is he merely a madman? The fierce expression and the criminal depths of his looks are perhaps caused merely by the extraordinary contrast between his fierce looks and his pale eyes."

And absorbed in these thoughts, Monsieur de Vargnes unfortunately allowed several minutes to elapse. Then he thought to himself suddenly:

"No, I am not the sport of any hallucination,

and this is no case of an optical phenomenon. This man is evidently some terrible criminal, and I have altogether failed in my duty in not arresting him myself at once, illegally, even at the risk of my life."

The judge ran downstairs in pursuit of the doctor, but it was too late; he had disappeared. In the afternoon, he called on Madame de Frogère, to ask her whether she could tell him anything about the matter. She, however, did not know the negro doctor in the least, and was even able to assure him that he was a fictitious personage, for, as she was well acquainted with the upper classes in Haïti, she knew that the Academy of Medicine at Port-au-Prince had no doctor of that name among its members. As Monsieur de Vargnes persisted, and gave descriptions of the doctor, especially mentioning his extraordinary eyes, Madame de Frogère began to laugh, and said:

"You have certainly had to do with a hoaxer, my dear Monsieur. The eyes which you have described are certainly those of a white man, and the individual must have been painted."

On thinking it over, Monsieur de Vargnes remembered that the doctor had nothing of the negro about him but his black skin, his woolly hair and beard, and his way of speaking, which was easily imitated. He had not the characteristic, undulating walk. Perhaps, after all, he was only a practical joker, and during the whole day, Monsieur de Vargnes took refuge in that view, which rather wounded his dignity as a man of consequence, but appeased his scruples as a magistrate.

The next day, he received the promised letter, which was written, as well as addressed, in characters cut out of the newspapers. It was as follows:

"MONSIEUR:

"Doctor James Ferdinand does not exist, but the man whose eyes you saw does, and you will certainly recognize his eyes. This man has committed two crimes, for which he does not feel any remorse, but, as he is a psychologist, he is afraid of some day yielding to the irresistible temptation of confessing his crimes. You know better than anyone (and that is your most powerful aid), with what imperious force criminals, especially intellectual ones, feel this temptation. That great poet, Edgar Allan Poe, has written masterpieces on this subject, which express the truth exactly, but he has omitted to mention the last phenomenon, which I will tell you. Yes, I, a criminal, feel a terrible wish for somebody to know of my crimes, and when this requirement is satisfied, when my secret has been revealed to a confidant, I shall be tranquil for the future, and be freed from this demon of perversity, which only tempts us once. Well! Now that is accomplished. You shall have my secret: from the day that you recognize me by my eyes, you will try and find out what I am guilty of, and how I was guilty, and you will discover it, being a master of your profession, which, by-the-bye, has procured you the honor of having been chosen by me to bear the weight of this secret, which now is shared by us, and by us two alone. I say, advisedly, *by us two alone.* You could not, as a matter of fact, prove the reality of this secret to anyone, unless I were to confess it, and I defy you to obtain my public confession, as I have confessed it to you, *and without danger to myself.*"

Three months later, Monsieur de Vargnes met Monsieur X—— at an evening party, and at first sight, and without the slightest hesitation, he recognized in him those very pale, very cold, and very clear blue eyes, eyes which it was impossible to forget.

The man himself remained perfectly impassive, so that Monsieur de Vargnes was forced to say to himself:

"Probably I am the sport of an hallucination at this moment, or else there are two pairs of eyes that are perfectly similar, in the world. And what eyes! Can it be possible?"

The magistrate instituted inquiries into his life, and he discovered this, which removed all his doubts.

Five years previously, Monsieur X—— had been a very poor but very brilliant medical student, who, although he never took his doctor's degree, had already made himself remarkable by his microbiological researches.

A young and very rich widow had fallen in love with him and married him. She had one child by her first marriage, and in the space of six months, first the child and then the mother died of typhoid fever. Thus Monsieur X—— had inherited a large fortune, in due form, and without any possible dispute. Everybody said that he had attended to the two patients with the utmost devotion. Now, were these two deaths the two crimes mentioned in his letter?

But then, Monsieur X—— must have poisoned his two victims with the microbes of typhoid fever, which he had skillfully cultivated in them, so as to make the disease incurable, even by the most devoted care and attention. Why not?

"Do you really believe it?" I asked Monsieur de Vargnes.

"Absolutely," he replied. "And the most terrible thing about it is that the villain is right when he defies me to force him to confess his crime publicly, for I see no means of obtaining a confession, none whatever. For a moment I thought of magnetism,

but who could magnetize that man with those pale, cold, bright eyes? With such eyes, he would force the magnetizer to denounce himself as the culprit."

And then he said, with a deep sigh:

"Ah! Formerly there was something good about justice!"

When he saw my inquiring looks, he added in a firm and perfectly convinced voice:

"Formerly, justice had torture at its command."

"Upon my word," I replied, with all an author's unconscious and simple egotism, "it is quite certain that without the torture, this strange tale will have no conclusion, and that is very unfortunate, so far as regards the story I intended to make out of it."

A GOOD MATCH

STRAUSS'S band was playing in the rooms of the Horticultural Society. They were so crowded that the young cadet Hussar-sergeant Max B., who had nothing better to do on an afternoon when he was off duty than to drink a glass of good beer and to listen to a new waltz tune, had already been looking about for a seat for some time, when the head waiter, who knew him, quickly took him to an unoccupied place, and without waiting for his order brought him a glass of beer. A very gentlemanly looking man and three elegantly dressed ladies were sitting at the table.

The cadet saluted them with military politeness, and sat down, but almost before he could put the glass to his lips, he noticed that the two elder ladies, who appeared to be married, turned up their noses very much at his taking a seat at their table, and even said a few words which he could not catch, but which no doubt referred unpleasantly to him.

"I am afraid I am in the way here," the cadet said; and he got up to leave, when he felt a pull at his *sabretasche* beneath the table. At the same time the gentleman felt bound to say with some embarrassment:

"Oh! not at all; on the contrary, we are very pleased that you have chosen this table."

Thereupon the cadet resumed his seat, not so much because he took the gentleman's invitation to be sincere, but because the silent request to remain, which he had received under the table, and which was much more sincerely meant, had raised in him one of those charming illusions which are so frequent in our youth, and which promise with electrical rapidity so much happiness. He could not doubt for a moment that the daring invitation came from the third, the youngest and prettiest of the ladies, into whose company a fortunate accident had thrown him.

From the moment that he had sat down by her, however, she did not deign to bestow even another look on him, much less a word. To the young hussar, who was still rather inexperienced in such matters, this seemed rather strange; but he possessed enough natural tact not to expose himself to a rebuff by any hasty advances, and quietly awaited further developments of the adventure on the part of the heroine of it. This gave him the opportunity of looking at her more closely, and for this he employed the moments when their attention was diverted from him and taken up by conversation among themselves.

The girl, whom the others called Angelica, was a thorough Viennese beauty, not exactly beautiful,

for her features were not Roman or Greek, nor even strictly German. Yet they possessed every female charm, and were seductive, in the fullest sense of the word. Her strikingly small nose — which in a lady's maid might have been called impudent — and her little mouth with its voluptuously full lips — which would have been called lustful in a street-walker — imparted an indescribably piquant charm to her small head which was surmounted by an imposing tower of that soft brown hair which is so common among Viennese women. Her bright eyes were full of good sense, and a merry smile lurked continually in the most charming little dimples near her mouth and on her chin.

In less than a quarter of an hour, our cadet was fettered, with no more will of his own than a slave has, to the triumphal chariot of this delightful little creature, and, as he hoped and believed, forever. And he was a man worth capturing. He was tall and slim, but muscular, looked like an athlete, and at the same time had one of those handsome, open faces which women like so much. His honest, dark eyes showed strength of will, courage, and strong passion and that women also like.

During an interval in the music, an elderly gentleman, with the ribbon of an order in his buttonhole, came up to the table. From the manner in which he greeted them, it was evident that he was an old friend. From their conversation, which was carried on in a very loud tone of voice, and with much animation, in the bad Viennese fashion, the cadet gathered that the gentleman who was with the ladies was a Councilor of Legation, and that the eldest lady

was his wife, while the second lady was a married, and the youngest an unmarried, sister-in-law. When they at last rose to go, the pretty girl, evidently intentionally, put her velvet jacket, trimmed with valuable sable, very loosely over her shoulders; then she remained standing at the exit, and slowly put it on, so that the cadet had an opportunity to get close to her.

"Follow us," she whispered to him, and then ran after the others.

The cadet was only too glad to obey her directions, and followed them at a distance, without being observed, to the house where they lived. A week passed without his seeing the pretty Angelica again, or without her giving him any sign of life. The waiter in the Horticultural Society's grounds, whom he asked about them, could tell him nothing more than that they were people of position. A few days later the cadet saw them all again at a concert, but he was satisfied with looking at his ideal from a distance. She, however, when she could do so without danger, gave him one of those coquettish looks which inexperienced young men imagine express the innermost feelings of a pure, virgin heart. On that occasion she left the grounds with her sisters much earlier, and as she passed the handsome cadet, she let a small piece of rolled-up paper fall, which only contained the words: "Come at ten o'clock to-night and ring the bell."

He was outside the house at the stroke of ten and rang, but his astonishment knew no bounds when, instead of Angelica or her confidential maid, the housekeeper opened the door. She saw his confu-

sion, and quickly put an end to it by taking his hand, and pulling him into the house.

"Come with me," she whispered; "I know all about it. The young lady will be here directly, so come along."

Then she led him through the kitchen into a room which was shut off from the rest of the house, which she had apparently furnished for similar meetings, on her own account, and left him there by himself. The cadet was rather surprised to see the elegant furniture, a wide, soft couch, and some rather suggestive pictures in broad, gilt frames. In a few minutes, the beautiful girl came in, and without any further ceremony, threw her arms round the young soldier's neck. In her negligée, she appeared to him much more beautiful than in her elegant outdoor dress, but the virginal fragrance which then pervaded her had given way to that voluptuous atmosphere which surrounds a young, newly-married woman.

Angelica, whose little feet were encased in blue velvet slippers lined with ermine, and who was wrapped in a richly embroidered, white dressing-gown, trimmed with lace, drew the handsome cadet to the couch with affectionate grace, and almost before he exactly knew what he had come for, she was his. The young soldier, who was half dazed at his unexpected victory and good fortune, did not leave her until after twelve o'clock. He returned every night at ten, rang the bell, was admitted by the girl's slyly-smiling confidant, and a few moments later was clasping his little goddess, who used to wrap her delicate, white limbs sometimes in dark sable, and at others in princely ermine, in his arms. Every

time they partook of a delicious supper, laughed and joked and loved each other like only young and good-looking people do love, and frequently entertained one another until morning.

Once the cadet attempted diffidently to pay the housekeeper for her services, and also for the supper, but she refused his money with a laugh, and said that everything was already settled. The young soldier had reveled in this manner in boundless bliss for four months, when, by an unfortunate accident, he met his mistress in the street one day. She was alone, but in spite of this, when he was about to speak to her, she contracted her delicate, finely-arched eyebrows angrily, and turned her head away. This hurt the honest young fellow's feelings, and when that evening she drew him to her bosom, which was rising and falling tempestuously under the black velvet that covered it, he remonstrated with her quietly, but emphatically. She made a little grimace, and looking at him coldly and angrily, she at last said, shortly: "I forbid you to take any notice of me out of doors. I do not choose to recognize you; do you understand?"

The cadet was surprised and did not reply, but the harmony of his pleasures was destroyed by a harsh discord. For some time he bore his misery in silence and with resignation, but at last the situation became unendurable; his mistress's fiery kisses and the pleasure which she gave him seemed to mock and to degrade him; so at last he summoned up courage, and in his open way came straight to the point.

"What do you think of our future, Angelica?"

She wrinkled her brows a little. "Do not let us talk about it; at any rate not to-day."

"Why not? We must talk about it sooner or later," he replied, "and I think it is high time for me to explain my intentions to you, if I do not wish to appear as a dishonorable scoundrel in your eyes."

She looked at him in surprise. "I look upon you as one of the best and most honorable of men, Max," she said, soothingly, after a pause.

"And do you trust me also?"

"Of course I do."

"Are you convinced that I love you honestly?"

"Quite."

"Then do not hesitate any longer to bestow your hand upon me," her lover said in conclusion.

"What are you thinking about?" she cried, quickly, in a tone of refusal.

"What is to be the end of our connection? What is at any rate not permissible in a woman is wrong and dishonorable in a girl. You yourself must feel lowered if you do not become my wife as soon as possible."

"What a narrow-minded view," Angelica replied, angrily; "but as you wish it, I will give you my opinion on the subject, but by letter."

"No, no; now, directly."

The pretty girl did not speak for some time, and looked down, but suddenly she looked at her lover, and a malicious, mocking smile lurked in the corners of her mouth.

"Well, I love you, Max, I love you really and ardently," she said, carelessly; "but I can never be your wife. If you were an officer I might perhaps marry you; yes, I certainly would, but as it is, it is impossible."

"Is that your last word?" the cadet said, in great excitement.

She only nodded, and then put her full, white arms round his neck, with all the security of a mistress who is granting some favor to her slave; but on this occasion she was mistaken. He sprang up, seized his sword, and hurried out of the room. She let him go, feeling certain that he would come back again. But he did not do so, and when she wrote to him, he did not answer her letters, and still did not come; so at last she gave him up.

It was a bad, a very bad, experience for the honorable young fellow. The highborn, frivolous girl had trampled on all the ideals and illusions of his life with her small feet, for he then saw only too clearly that she had not loved him, but that he had only served her pleasures and her lusts, while he, he had loved her so truly!

* * * * * * *

About a year after the catastrophe with charming Angelica, Max happened to be in his captain's quarters, and accidentally saw a large photograph of a lady on the writing table. On going up and looking at it, he recognized — Angelica.

"What a beautiful girl," he said, wishing to find out how the land lay.

"That is the lady I am going to marry," said the captain, whose vanity was flattered. "She is as pure, as good, and as beautiful as an angel, and into the bargain she comes of a very good and very rich family; in short, in the fullest sense of the word, she is 'a good match.'"

AN ARTIFICE

THE old doctor and his young patient were talking by the side of the fire. There was nothing really the matter with her, except that she had one of those little feminine ailments from which pretty women frequently suffer — slight *anæmia*, nervous attack, and a suspicion of fatigue, probably of that fatigue from which newly-married people often suffer at the end of the first month of their married life, when they have made a love match.

She was lying on the couch and talking, "No, doctor," she said; "I shall never be able to understand a woman deceiving her husband. Even allowing that she does not love him, that she pays no heed to her vows and promises, how can she give herself to another man? How can she conceal the intrigue from other people's eyes? How can it be possible to love amid lies and treason?"

The doctor smiled, and replied: "It is perfectly easy, and I can assure you that a woman does not

think of all those little subtle details, when she has made up her mind to go astray. I even feel certain that no woman is ripe for true love until she has passed through all the promiscuousness and all the irksomeness of married life, which, according to an illustrious man, is nothing but an exchange of ill-tempered words by day and perfunctory caresses at night. Nothing is more true, for no woman can love passionately until after she has married.

"As for dissimulation, all women have plenty of it on hand on such occasions. The simplest of them are wonderful tacticians, and extricate themselves from the greatest dilemmas in an extraordinary way."

The young woman, however, seemed incredulous. "No, doctor," she said; "one never thinks, until after it has happened, of what one ought to have done in a dangerous affair, and women are certainly more liable than men to lose their head on such occasions."

The doctor raised his hands: "After it has happened, you say! Now I will tell you something that happened to one of my female patients, whom I always considered an immaculate woman.

"It happened in a provincial town. One night when I was sleeping profoundly, in that deep, first sleep from which it is so difficult to rouse yourself, it seemed to me in my dreams as if the bells in the town were sounding a fire alarm and I woke up with a start. It was my own bell which was ringing wildly, and as my footman did not seem to be answering the door, I in turn pulled the bell at the head of my bed. Soon I heard banging and steps

in the silent house, and then Jean came into my room and handed me a letter which said: 'Madame Lelièvre begs Dr. Siméon to come to her immediately.'

"I thought for a few moments, and then I said to myself: 'A nervous attack, vapors, nonsense; I am too tired.' And so I replied: 'As Doctor Siméon is not at all well, he must beg Madame Lelièvre to be kind enough to call in his colleague, Monsieur Bonnet.'

"I put the note into an envelope, and went to sleep again, but about half an hour later, the street bell rang again, and Jean came to me and said: 'There is somebody downstairs—I do not quite know whether it is a man or a woman, as the individual is so wrapped up—who wishes to speak to you immediately. He says it is a matter of life and death for two people.' Whereupon, I sat up in bed and told him to show the person in.

"A kind of black phantom appeared, who raised her veil as soon as Jean had left the room. It was Madame Bertha Lelièvre, quite a young woman, who had been married for three years to a large shopkeeper in the town, and was said to have been the prettiest girl in the neighborhood.

"She was terribly pale, her face was contracted like the faces of mad people are, occasionally, and her hands trembled violently. Twice she tried to speak without being able to utter a sound, but at last she stammered out:

"'Come—quick—quick, doctor— Come—my —my lover has just died in my bedroom.' She stopped, half suffocated with emotion, and then went

on: 'My husband will—be coming home from the club very soon.'

"I jumped out of bed, without even considering that I was only in my nightshirt, and dressed myself in a few moments. Then I said: 'Did you come a short time ago?'

"'No,' she said, standing like a statue petrified with horror. 'It was my servant—she knows.' And then, after a short silence, she went on: 'I was there—by his side.' And she uttered a sort of cry of horror, and after a fit of choking, which made her gasp, she wept violently, shaking with spasmodic sobs for a minute or two. Then her tears suddenly ceased, as if dried by an internal fire, and with an air of tragic calmness, she said: 'Let us make haste.'

"I was ready, but I exclaimed: 'I quite forgot to order my carriage.'

"'I have one,' she said; 'it is his, which was waiting for him!' She wrapped herself up, so as to completely conceal her face, and we started.

"When she was by my side in the darkness of the carriage, she suddenly seized my hand, and crushing it in her delicate fingers she said, with a shaking voice, that proceeded from a distracted heart: 'Oh! If you only knew, if you only knew what I am suffering! I loved him, I have loved him distractedly, like a mad woman, for the last six months.'

"'Is anyone up in your house?' I asked.

"'No, nobody except Rose, who knows everything.'

"We stopped at the door. Evidently everybody was asleep, and we went in without making any noise, by means of her latchkey, and walked upstairs

on tiptoe. The frightened servant was sitting on the top of the stairs, with a lighted candle by her side, as she was afraid to stop by the dead man. I went into the room, which was turned upside down, as if there had been a struggle in it. The bed, which was tumbled and open, seemed to be waiting for somebody; one of the sheets was thrown on to the floor, and wet napkins, with which they had bathed the young man's temples, were lying by the side of a wash-hand basin and a glass, while a strong smell of vinegar pervaded the room.

"The dead man's body was lying at full length in the middle of the room, and I went up to it, looked at it, and touched it. I opened the eyes, and felt the hands, and then, turning to the two women, who were shaking as if they were frozen, I said to them: 'Help me to lift him on to the bed.' When we had laid him gently on to it, I listened to his heart, put a looking-glass to his lips, and then said: 'It is all over; let us make haste and dress him.' It was a terrible sight!

"I took his limbs one by one, as if they had belonged to some enormous doll, and held them out to the clothes which the women brought, and they put on his socks, drawers, trousers, waistcoat, and lastly the coat; but it was a difficult matter to get the arms into the sleeves.

"When it came to buttoning his boots, the two women kneeled down, while I held the light. As his feet were rather swollen, it was very difficult, and as they could not find a button hook, they had to use their hairpins. When the terrible toilette was over, I looked at our work and said: 'You ought to

arrange his hair a little.' The girl went and brought her mistress's large-toothed comb and brush, but as she was trembling, and pulling out his long, tangled hair in doing it, Madame Lelièvre took the comb out of her hand, and arranged his hair as if she were caressing him. She parted it, brushed his beard, rolled his mustaches gently round her fingers, as she had no doubt been in the habit of doing, in the familiarities of their intrigue.

"Suddenly, however, letting go of his hair, she took her dead lover's inert head in her hands, and looked for a long time in despair at the dead face, which no longer could smile at her. Then, throwing herself on to him, she took him into her arms and kissed him ardently. Her kisses fell like blows on to his closed mouth and eyes, on to his forehead and temples, and then, putting her lips to his ear, as if he could still hear her, and as if she were about to whisper something to him, to make their embraces still more ardent, she said several times, in a heartrending voice: 'Adieu, my darling!'

"Just then the clock struck twelve, and I started up. 'Twelve o'clock!' I exclaimed. 'That is the time when the club closes. Come, Madame, we have not a moment to lose!'

"She started up, and I said: 'We must carry him into the drawing-room.' When we had done this, I placed him on a sofa, and lit the chandeliers, and just then the front door was opened and shut noisily. The husband had come back, and I said: 'Rose, bring me the basin and the towels, and make the room look tidy. Make haste, for heaven's sake! Monsieur Lelièvre is coming in.'

"I heard his steps on the stairs, and then his hands feeling along the walls. 'Come here, my dear fellow,' I said; 'we have had an accident.'

"And the astonished husband appeared in the door with a cigar in his mouth, and said: 'What is the matter? What is the meaning of this?'

"'My dear friend,' I said, going up to him; 'you find us in great embarrassment. I had remained late, chatting with your wife and our friend, who had brought me in his carriage, when he suddenly fainted, and in spite of all we have done, he has remained unconscious for two hours. I did not like to call in strangers, and if you will now help me downstairs with him, I shall be able to attend to him better at his own house.'

"The husband, who was surprised, but quite unsuspicious, took off his hat. Then he took his rival, who would be quite inoffensive for the future, under the arms. I got between his two legs, as if I had been a horse between the shafts, and we went downstairs, while his wife lighted us. When we got outside, I held the body up, so as to deceive the coachman, and said: 'Come, my friend; it is nothing; you feel better already, I expect. Pluck up your courage, and make an attempt. It will soon be over.' But as I felt that he was slipping out of my hands, I gave him a slap on the shoulder, which sent him forward and made him fall into the carriage; then I got in after him.

"Monsieur Lelièvre, who was rather alarmed, said to me: 'Do you think it is anything serious?' To which I replied, '*No,*' with a smile, as I looked at his wife, who had put her arm into that of her

legitimate husband, and was trying to see into the carriage.

"I shook hands with them, and told my coachman to start, and during the whole drive the dead man kept falling against me. When we got to his house, I said that he had become unconscious on the way home, and helped to carry him upstairs, where I certified that he was dead, and acted another comedy to his distracted family. At last I got back to bed, not without swearing at lovers."

The doctor ceased, though he was still smiling, and the young woman, who was in a very nervous state, said: "Why have you told me that terrible story."

He gave her a gallant bow, and replied:

"So that I may offer you my services, if necessary."

ALLOUMA

I.

One of my friends had said to me: "If you happen to be near Bordj-Ebbaba while you are in Algeria, be sure and go to see my old friend Auballe, who has settled there."

I had forgotten the name of Auballe and of Ebbaba, and I was not thinking of the man, when I arrived at his house by pure accident. For a month, I had been wandering on foot through that magnificent district which extends from Algiers to Cherchel, Orléansville, and Tiaret. It is at the same time wooded and bare, grand and charming. Between two hills, you come across large pine forests, in narrow valleys through which torrents rush in the winter. Enormous trees, which have fallen across the ravine, serve as bridges for the Arabs, and also for the tropical creepers, which twine round the dead stems, and adorn them with new life. There are hollows, in little known recesses of the mountains,

terrible, yet beautiful in character, and the banks of the brooks, which are covered with oleanders, are indescribably lovely.

But the most pleasant recollections of that excursion are the long after-dinner walks, along the slightly wooded roads on those undulating hills from which one can see an immense tract of country stretching from the blue sea as far as the chain of the Ouarsenis, on whose summit is the cedar forest of Teniet-el-Haad.

On that day I lost my way. I had just climbed to the top of a hill, whence, beyond a long extent of rising ground, I could see the extensive plain of Metidja, and then, on the summit of another chain, almost invisible in the distance, that strange monument called "The Tomb of the Christian Woman," which is said to be the burial-place of the kings of Mauritania. I descended again, heading southward, with a yellow landscape before me, extending as far as the fringe of the desert, as yellow as if all the hills were covered with lions' skins sewn together. Sometimes a pointed yellow peak would rise out of them, like the hump of a camel.

I walked quickly and lightly, as one does when following tortuous paths on a mountain slope. Nothing seems to weigh on you in those short, quick walks through the invigorating air of those heights, neither body, nor heart, nor thoughts, nor cares. On that day I felt nothing of all that crushes and tortures our life; I only felt the pleasure of that descent. In the distance I saw an Arab encampment, brown pointed tents which seemed fixed to the earth like limpets to a rock, or else *gourbis*, huts made of

branches, from which a gray smoke rose. White figures, men and women, were walking slowly about, and the bells of the flocks sounded vaguely through the evening air.

The arbutus trees on my road hung down under the weight of the purple fruit, which was falling on the ground. They looked like martyred trees, from which a blood-colored sweat was falling, for at the top of every tier there was a red spot, like a drop of blood.

The ground all round them was covered with it, and as my feet crushed the fruit, they left blood-colored traces behind them. Sometimes, as I went along, I would reach and pick one and eat it.

By this time all the valleys were filled with a white vapor, which rose slowly, like the steam from the flanks of an ox, and on the chain of mountains that bordered the horizon, on the outskirts of the desert of Sahara, the sky was in flames. Long streaks of gold alternated with streaks of blood — blood again! Blood and gold, the whole of human history — and sometimes between the two there was a small opening in the greenish azure, far away like a dream.

How far away I was from all those persons and things with which one occupies oneself on the boulevards! Far from myself also, for I had become a kind of wandering being, without thought or consciousness; far from any road, too, indeed not troubling about one, for as night came on, I found that I had lost my way.

The shades of night were falling on the earth like a darkling shower, and I saw nothing before me but the mountain, in the far distance. Presently, how-

ever, I saw some tents in the valley, into which I descended, and tried to make the first Arab I met understand in which direction I wanted to go. I do not know whether he understood me, but he gave me a long answer, which I did not in the least understand. In despair, I was about to make up my mind to pass the night wrapped up in a cloak near the encampment, when among the strange words that he uttered, I fancied that I heard the name, "Bordj-Ebbaba," and so I repeated:

"Bordj-Ebbaba."

"Yes, yes."

I showed him two francs—a fortune to him, and he started off, while I followed—yes, followed that pale phantom striding bare-footed before me along stony paths, on which I stumbled continually, for a long time. Suddenly I saw a light, and we soon reached the door of a white house, a kind of fortress with straight walls, without any outside windows. When I knocked, dogs began to bark inside, and a voice asked in French:

"Who is there?"

"Does Monsieur Auballe live here?" I asked.

"Yes."

The door was opened for me, and I found myself face to face with Monsieur Auballe himself, a tall man in slippers, with a pipe in his mouth and the looks of a good-natured Hercules.

As soon as I mentioned my name, he put out both his hands and said:

"Consider yourself at home here, Monsieur."

A quarter of an hour later I was dining ravenously, opposite to my host, who went on smoking.

I knew his history. After having wasted a great amount of money on women, he had invested the remnants of his fortune in Algerian landed property and had taken to money-making. It turned out prosperously; he was happy and had the calm look of a contented man. I could not understand how this gay Parisian could have grown accustomed to that monstrous life in such a lonely spot, and I asked him about it.

"How long have you been here?" I asked.

"Nine years."

"And have you not been intolerably dull and miserable?"

"No, one gets used to this country, and ends by liking it. You cannot imagine how it lays hold of you by those small, animal instincts that we are ignorant of, ourselves. We first become attached to it by our organs, to which it affords a secret gratification that we cannot define. The air and the climate dominate the body, in spite of ourselves, and the bright light with which the country is inundated keeps the mind clear and fresh, at but little cost. It penetrates you continually by the inlet of vision, and one might really say that it cleanses the somber nooks of the soul."

"But what about women?"

"Ah! There is rather a dearth of them!"

"Only *rather?*"

"Well, yes, rather. For one can always, even among the Arabs, find some complaisant, native women, who think of the nights of Roumi."

He turned to the Arab who was waiting on me, a tall, dark fellow, with bright, black eyes that flashed beneath his turban, and said to him:

"I will call you when I want you, Mohammed." Then, turning to me, he said:

"He understands French, and I am going to tell you a story in which he plays a leading part."

As soon as the man had left the room, he began:

"I had been here about four years, and scarcely felt quite settled yet in this country, whose language I was beginning to speak. I was forced, in order not to break too suddenly away from those passions that had been fatal to me in other places, to go to Algiers for a few days, from time to time.

"I had bought this farm, this *bordj*, which had been a fortified post, and was within a few hundred yards of the native encampment, whose men I employ to cultivate my land. Among the tribe that had settled here, and which formed a portion of the Ouled-Taadja, I chose, as soon as I arrived here, the tall fellow whom you have just seen, Mohammed ben Lam'har, who soon became greatly attached to me. As he would not sleep in a house, not being accustomed to it, he pitched his tent a few yards from my house, so that I might be able to call him from my window.

"You can guess what my life was, I dare say? Every day I was busy with cleanings and plantings. I hunted a little, and used to go and dine with the officers of the neighboring fortified posts, or else they came and dined with me. As for pleasures—I have told you what they consisted in. Algiers offered me some which were rather more refined, and from time to time a complaisant and compassionate Arab would stop me when I was out for a walk and offer to bring one of the women of his tribe to my house

at night. Sometimes I accepted, but more frequently I refused, from fear of the disagreeable consequences and troubles it might entail upon me.

"One evening, at the beginning of summer, as I was going home after inspecting the farm, I wanted Mohammed. I went into his tent without calling him, as I frequently did, and there I saw a woman, a girl sleeping almost naked, with her arms crossed under her head, on one of those thick, red carpets, made of the fine wool of Djebel-Amour, which are as soft and as thick as a feather bed. Her body, which was beautifully white under the ray of light that came in through the raised covering of the tent, appeared to me to be one of the most perfect specimens of the human race that I had ever seen, though most of the women about here are beautiful and tall and are a rare combination of feature and shape. I let the edge of the tent fall in some confusion, and returned home.

"I love women! The sudden flash of this vision had penetrated and scorched me, had rekindled in my veins that old, formidable ardor to which I owe my being here. It was very hot, for it was July, and I spent nearly the whole night at my window with my eyes fixed on the black spot Mohammed's tent made on the ground.

"When he came into my room the next morning, I looked him closely in the face, and he hung his head, like a man who was guilty and in confusion. Did he guess that I knew? I, however, asked him, suddenly:

"'So you are married, Mohammed?' I saw that he got red; then he stammered out: 'No, *mo's-sieuia!*'

"I used to make him speak French to me, and to give me Arabic lessons, which was often productive of a most incoherent mixture of languages. However, I went on:

"'Then why is there a woman in your tent?'

"'She comes from the South,' he said, in a low, apologetic voice.

"'Oh! So she comes from the South? But that does not explain to me how she comes to be in your tent.'

"Without answering my question, he continued:

"'She is very pretty.'

"'Oh! Indeed. Another time, please, when you happen to receive a pretty woman from the South, you will take care that she comes to my *gourbi,* and not to yours. You understand me, Mohammed?'

"'Yes, *mo'ssieuia,*' he repeated, seriously.

"I must acknowledge that during the whole day I was in a state of aggressive excitement at the recollection of that Arab girl lying on the red carpet, and when I went in at dinner time, I felt very strongly inclined to go to Mohammed's tent again. During the evening, he waited on me just as usual, hovering round me with his impassive face, and several times I was very nearly asking him whether he intended to keep that pretty girl from the South in his camel skin tent for a long time.

"Toward nine o'clock, still troubled with that longing for female society which is as tenacious as the hunting instinct in dogs, I went out to get some fresh air, and to stroll for a little while round that cone of brown skin through which I could see a brilliant speck of light. I did not remain long, how-

ever, for fear of being surprised by Mohammed in the neighborhood of his dwelling. When I went in an hour later, I clearly saw his outline in the tent. Then taking the key out of my pocket, I went into the *bordj*, where, besides myself, there slept my steward, two French laborers, and an old cook whom I had picked up in Algiers. As I went upstairs, I was surprised to see a streak of light under my door. When I opened it, I saw a girl with the face of a statue sitting on a straw chair by the side of the table, on which a wax candle was burning. She was bedizened with all those silver gew-gaws which women in the South wear on their legs, arms, breasts, and even on their stomachs. Her eyes, which were tinged with kohl, to make them look larger, looked at me earnestly, and four little blue spots, finely tattooed on her skin, marked her forehead, her cheeks, and her chin. Her arms, which were loaded with bracelets, were resting on her hips, which were covered by the long, red silk skirt that she wore.

"When she saw me come in, she got up and remained standing in front of me, covered with her barbaric jewels, in an attitude of proud submission.

"'What are you doing here?' I said to her in Arabic.

"'I am here because Mohammed told me to come.'

"'Very well, sit down.'

"So she sat down and lowered her eyes while I examined her attentively.

"She had a strange, regular, delicate, yet rather sensual face, as mysterious as that of a Buddha. Her lips, which were rather thick, were covered with

a reddish efflorescence, which I discovered on the rest of her body as well. This indicated a slight admixture of negro blood, although her hands and arms were of an irreproachable whiteness.

"I hesitated what to do with her, and felt excited, tempted, and rather confused. So in order to gain time and to give myself opportunity for reflection, I put other questions to her — about her birth, how she came into this part of the country, and what her connection with Mohammed was. But she only replied to those that interested me the least, and it was impossible for me to find out why she had come, with what intention, by whose orders, or what had taken place between her and my servant. However, just as I was about to say to her: 'Go back to Mohammed's tent,' she seemed to guess my intention, for getting up suddenly, and raising her two bare arms, on which the jingling bracelets slipped down to her shoulders, she crossed her hands behind my neck and drew me toward her with an irresistible air of suppliant longing.

"Her eyes, which were bright from emotion, from that necessity of conquering man which makes the looks of an impure woman as seductive as those of the feline tribe, allured me, enchained me, deprived me of all power of resistance, and filled me with impetuous ardor. It was a short, sharp struggle of the eyes only, that eternal struggle between the two human brutes, the male and the female, in which the male is always beaten.

"Her hands, which were clasped behind my head, drew me irresistibly, with the gentle, increasing pressure of a mechanical force, toward her red lips, on

which I suddenly laid mine, while, at the same moment, I clasped her waist, which was covered with jingling silver rings, in an ardent embrace.

"She was as strong, as healthy, and as supple as a wild animal, with all the motions, the ways, the grace, and even something of the look of a gazelle, which made me find a rare, unknown zest in her kisses, as strange to my senses as the taste of tropical fruits.

"Soon—I say soon, although it may have been toward morning—I wished to send her away, as I thought that she would go in the same way that she had come. I did not even, at the moment, ask myself what I should do with her, or what she would do with me, but as soon as she guessed my intention, she whispered:

"'What do you expect me to do, if you get rid of me now? I shall have to sleep on the ground in the open air, at night. Let me sleep on the carpet at the foot of your bed.'

"What answer could I give her, or what could I do? I thought that Mohammed would no doubt be watching the window of my room, in which a light was burning, and questions of various natures, that I had not put to myself during the first minutes, formulated themselves clearly in my brain.

"'Stop here,' I replied, 'and we will talk.'

"My resolution was taken in a moment. As this girl had been thrown into my arms, in this manner, I would keep her; I would make her a kind of slave-mistress, hidden in my house, like women in a harem are. When the time should come that I no longer cared for her, it would be easy for me to get rid of

her in some way or another, for on African soil this sort of creatures almost belong to us, body and soul. So I said to her:

"'I wish to be kind to you, and I will treat you so that you shall not be unhappy, but I want to know who you are and where you come from?'

"She saw clearly that she must say something, and she told me her story, or rather a story, for no doubt she was lying from beginning to end, as Arabs always do, with or without any motive.

"That is one of the most surprising and incomprehensible signs of the native character—the Arabs always lie. Those people in whom Islam has become incarnate, has become part of themselves, to such an extent as to model their instincts, to mold the entire race, and differentiate it from others in morals just as much as the color of the skin differentiates a negro from a white man, are liars to the backbone, so that one can never trust a word that they say. I do not know whether they owe this to their religion, but one must have lived among them in order to know the extent to which lying forms part of their being, of their heart and soul. It has become a kind of second nature, a very necessity of life, with them.

"Well, she told me that she was the daughter of a *Caidi* of the *Ouled Sidi Cheik,* and of a woman whom he had carried off in a raid against the Touaregs. The woman must have been a black slave, or, at any rate, have sprung from a first cross of Arab and negro blood. It is well known that negro women are in great request for harems, where they act in various capacities. Nothing of such an origin was to be noticed, however, except the purple color of her lips,

and the dark blush of her elongated breasts, which were as supple as if they were on springs. Nobody who knew anything about the matter could be mistaken in that. But all the rest of her belonged to the beautiful race from the South, fair, supple, and with a delicate face formed on straight and simple lines like those of a Hindoo figure. Her eyes, which were very far apart, still further heightened the somewhat goddess-like looks of this desert marauder.

"I knew nothing exact about her real life. She related it to me in incoherent fragments, that seemed to rise up at random from a disordered memory, and she mixed up deliciously childish observations with them — a vision of a nomad world, born in a squirrel's brain, that had leaped from tent to tent, from encampment to encampment, from tribe to tribe. And all this was done with the grave aspect which this reserved people always preserve — the appearance of a brass idol, and rather comic in itself.

"When she had finished, I perceived that I had not remembered anything of the long story, full of insignificant events, that she had stored up in her flighty brain. I asked myself whether she had not simply been making fun of me by her empty and would-be serious chatter, which told me nothing about her, nor of any real facts connected with her life.

"And I thought of the conquered race, among whom our race has encamped, or, rather, who are camping among us, whose language we are beginning to speak, whom we see every day, living under the transparent linen of their tents — a race on whom we have imposed our laws, our regulations, and our cus-

toms, about whom we know nothing, nothing more whatever, I assure you, than if we had not been here, and solely occupied in looking at them, for nearly sixty years. We know no more about what is going on in those huts made of branches, and under those small canvas cones fastened to the ground by stakes, within twenty yards of our doors, than we know what the so-called civilized Arabs of the Moorish houses in Algiers do, think, and are. Behind the whitewashed walls of their town houses, behind the partitions of their *gourbis,* made of branches, or behind that thin, brown, camel-hair curtain which the wind moves, they live close to us, unknown, mysterious, cunning, submissive, smiling, impenetrable. What if I were to tell you that when I look at the neighboring encampment through my field glasses, I surmise that there are superstitions, customs, ceremonies, a thousand practices, of which we know nothing, and which we do not even suspect! Never previously, in all probability, did a conquered race escape so completely from the real domination, the moral influence, and the inveterate, but useless, investigations of the conquerors.

"I now suddenly felt the insurmountable, secret barrier which incomprehensible nature had set up between the two races, felt it more than ever before, between this girl and myself, between this woman who had just given herself to me, who had yielded herself to my caresses, and, thinking of it for the first time, I said to her: 'What is your name?'

"She did not speak for some moments. I saw her start, as if she had forgotten that I was there, and then, in her eyes, which were raised to mine, I saw

that that moment had sufficed for her to be overcome by sleep, by irresistible, sudden, almost overwhelming sleep, like everything that lays hold of the mobile senses of women, and she answered, carelessly, suppressing a yawn:

"'Allouma.'

"'Do you want to go to sleep?'

"'Yes,' she replied.

"'Very well then, go to sleep!'

"She stretched herself out tranquilly by my side, lying on her stomach, with her forehead resting on her folded arms. I felt almost immediately that her fleeting, untutored thoughts were lulled in repose, while I began to ponder, as I lay by her side, and tried to understand it all. Why had Mohammed given her to me? Had he acted the part of a loyal servant, who sacrifices himself for his master, even to the extent of resigning the woman he had brought into his own tent, to him? Or had he, on the other hand, obeyed a more complex and more practical, though less generous, impulse, in handing over this girl who had taken my fancy to my use? An Arab, when it is a question of women, is rigorously modest and unspeakably complaisant, and you can no more understand his rigorous yet easy morality, than you can all the rest of his sentiments. Perhaps, when I accidentally went into his tent, I had merely forestalled the benevolent intentions of this thoughtful servant, who had intended this woman, who might be his friend and accomplice, or perhaps even his mistress, for me.

"All these suppositions assailed me, and fatigued me so much that, at last, in my turn, I fell into a

profound sleep, from which I was roused by the creaking of my door. Mohammed had come in to call me as usual. He opened the window, through which a flood of light streamed in and fell on to Allouma, who was still asleep; then he picked up my trousers, coat, and waistcoat from the floor in order to brush them. He did not look at the woman who was lying by my side, did not seem to know or to remark that she was there, preserving his ordinary gravity, demeanor, and looks. But the light, the movement, the slight noise which his bare feet made, the feeling of the fresh air on her skin and in her lungs, roused Allouma from her lethargy. She stretched out her arms, turned over, opened her eyes, and looked at me and then Mohammed with the same indifference; then she sat up and said: 'I am hungry.'

"'What would you like?'

"'Kahoua.'

"'Coffee and bread and butter?'

"'Yes.'

"Mohammed remained standing close to the bed, with my clothes under his arm, waiting for my orders.

"'Bring breakfast for Allouma and me,' I said to him.

He went out, without his face betraying the slightest astonishment or anger, and as soon as he had left the room, I said to the girl:

"'Will you live in my house?'

"'I should like to, very much.'

"'I will give you a room to yourself and a woman to wait on you.'

"'You are very generous, and I am grateful to you.'

"'But if you behave badly, I shall send you away immediately.'

"'I will do everything that you wish me to.'

"She took my hand and kissed it as a token of submission, and just then Mohammed came in carrying a tray with our breakfast on it. I said to him:

"'Allouma is going to live here. You must spread a carpet on the floor of the room at the end of the passage, and get Abd-el-Kader-el-Hadara's wife to come and wait on her.'

"'Yes, *mo'ssieuia*.'

"That was all. An hour later, my beautiful Arab was installed in a large, airy, light room, and when I went in to see that everything was in order, she asked me in a supplicating voice, to give her a wardrobe with a looking-glass in the doors. I promised her one, and then I left her squatting on the carpet from Djebel-Amour, with a cigarette in her mouth, and gossiping with the old Arab woman I had sent for, as if they had known each other for years.

II.

"For a month I was very happy with her, and got strangely attached to this creature of another race, who seemed to me to belong to some other species, and to have been born on a neighboring planet.

"I did not love her; no, one does not love the women of that primitive continent. The small, pale

blue flower of Northern countries never unfolds between them and us, or even between them and their natural counterparts, the Arabs. They are too near to human animalism, their hearts are too rudimentary, their feelings are not refined enough to rouse that sentimental exaltation in us which is the poetry of love. Nothing intellectual, no intoxication of thought or of feeling is mingled with that sensual desire which those charming nonentities excite in us. Nevertheless, they captivate us like the others do, but in different fashion, less tenacious, and, at the same time, less cruel and painful.

"I cannot even now explain precisely what I felt for her. I said to you just now that this country, this bare land of Africa, without any arts, void of all intellectual pleasures, gradually captivates us by its climate, by the continual mildness of the dawn and sunset, by its delightful light, and by the feeling of absolute health with which it fills our organs. Well, then! Allouma captivated me in the same manner, by a thousand hidden, physical, alluring charms, and by the procreative seductiveness, not of her embraces, for she was of thoroughly oriental supineness in that respect, but of her sweet self-surrender.

"I left her absolutely free to come and go as she liked, and she certainly spent one afternoon out of two with the wives of my native agricultural laborers. Often also, she would remain for nearly a whole day admiring herself in front of a mahogany wardrobe with a large looking-glass in its doors, that I had got from Miliana.

"She examined herself with serious care, standing before the glass doors and following her own move-

ments with profound and serious attention. She walked with her head somewhat thrown back, in order to be able to see whether her hips and loins swayed properly; went away, came back again, and then, tired with her own movements, sat down on a cushion opposite to her own reflection, with her eyes fixed on her face in the glass and her whole soul absorbed in that picture.

"Soon, I began to notice that she went out nearly every morning after breakfast, and that she disappeared altogether until evening. As I felt rather anxious about this, I asked Mohammed whether he knew what she could be doing during all those long hours of absence—but he replied very calmly:

"'Do not be uneasy. It will be the Feast of Ramadan soon, and so she goes to say her prayers.'

"He seemed delighted at having Allouma in the house, but I never once saw anything suspicious between them. So I accepted the situation as it was, and let time, accident, and life act for themselves.

"Often, after I had inspected my farm, my vineyards, and my clearings, I used to take long walks. You know the magnificent forests there are in this part of Algeria, and those almost impenetrable ravines, where fallen pine-trees dam the mountain torrents, and yet again those little valleys filled with oleanders, which look like oriental carpets stretching along the banks of the streams. You know that now and again in these woods and on these hills, where you would think the foot of man had never penetrated, you suddenly see the white dome of a shrine that contains the bones of a humble, solitary Marabout.

"Now one evening as I was going home, I passed one of these Mohammedan chapels, and looking in through the door, which is always open, I saw a woman praying before the altar—an Arab woman, sitting on the ground in that dilapidated building, into which the wind entered as it pleased, heaping up the fine, dry pine needles in yellow heaps in the corners. I went near to see better and recognized Allouma. She neither saw nor heard me, so absorbed was she with the saint, to whom she was speaking in a low voice. She thought that she was alone with him, and was telling this servant of God all her troubles. Sometimes she stopped for a moment to think, trying to recollect what more she had to say, so that she might not forget anything that she wished to confide to him. Then, again, she would grow animated, as if he had replied to her, as if he had advised her to do something that she did not want to do, and the reasons for which she was impugning. I went away as I had come, without making any noise, and returned home to dinner.

"That evening, when I sent for her, I saw that she had a thoughtful look, which was not usual with her.

"'Sit down there,' I said, pointing to her place on the couch by my side. As soon as she had sat down, I stooped to kiss her, but she drew her head away quickly, and, in great astonishment, I said to her:

"'Well, what is the matter?'

"'It is the Ramadan,' she replied.

"I began to laugh, and said: 'And the Marabout has forbidden you to allow yourself to be kissed during the Ramadan?'

"'Oh, yes; I am an Arab woman, and you are a Roumi!'

"'And it would be a great sin?'

"'Oh, yes!'

"'So you ate nothing all day, until sunset?'

"'No, nothing.'

"'But you had something to eat after sundown?'

"'Yes.'

"'Well, then, as it is quite dark now, you ought not to be more strict about the rest than you are about your food.'

"She seemed irritated, wounded, and offended, and replied with an amount of pride that I had never noticed in her before:

"'If an Arab girl were to allow herself to be kissed by a Roumi during the Ramadan, she would be cursed forever.'

"'And that is to continue for a whole month?'

"'Yes, for the whole of the month of Ramadan,' she replied, with great determination.

"I assumed an irritated manner and said: 'Very well, then, you can go and spend the Ramadan with your family.'

"She seized my hands, and, laying them on her heart, she said:

"'Oh! Please do not be unkind, and you shall see how nice I will be. We will keep Ramadan together, if you like. I will look after you, and spoil you, but don't be unkind.'

"I could not help smiling at her funny manner and her unhappiness. I sent her to sleep at home, but, an hour later, just as I was thinking about going to bed, there came two little taps at my door. so

slight, however, that I scarcely heard them. When I said, 'Come in,' Allouma appeared carrying a large tray covered with Arab dainties—fried balls of rice, covered with sugar, and a variety of other strange, nomad pastry.

"She laughed, showing her white teeth, and repeated: 'Come, we will keep Ramadan together.'

"You know that the fast, which begins at dawn and ends at twilight, at the moment the eye can no longer distinguish a black from a white thread, is followed every evening by small, friendly entertainments, at which eating is kept up until the morning. The result is that for such of the natives as are not very scrupulous, Ramadan consists of turning day into night, and night into day. But Allouma carried her delicacy of conscience further than this. She placed her tray between us on the divan, and taking a small, sugared ball between her long, slender fingers, she put it into my mouth, and whispered: 'Eat it, it is very good.'

"I munched the light cake, which was really excellent, and asked her: 'Did you make that?'

"'Yes.'

"'For me?'

"'Yes, for you.'

"'To enable me to support Ramadan?'

"'Oh! Don't be so unkind! I will bring you some every day.'

"Oh! the terrible month that I spent! A sugared, insipidly sweet month; a month that nearly drove me mad; a month of spoiling and of temptation, of anger and of vain efforts against an invincible resistance. But at last the three days of Beiram came, which I

celebrated in my own fashion, and Ramadan was forgotten.

"The summer went on, and it was very hot. In the first days of autumn, Allouma appeared to me to be preoccupied and absent-minded, and seemingly took no interest in anything. At last, when I sent for her one evening, she was not to be found in her room. I thought that she was roaming about the house, and I gave orders to look for her. She had not come in, however, and so I opened my window, and called out:

"'Mohammed,' and the voice of the man, who was in his tent, replied:

"'Yes, *mo'ssieuia.*'

"'Do you know where Allouma is?'

"'No, *mo'ssieuia*—it is not possible—is Allouma lost?'

"A few moments later, my Arab came into my room so agitated that he could not master his feelings, and I said:

"'Is Allouma lost?'

"'Yes, she is lost.'

"'It is impossible. Go and look for her,' I said.

"He remained standing where he was, thinking, seeking for her motives, and unable to understand anything about it. Then he went into the empty room, where Allouma's clothes were lying about in oriental disorder. He examined everything, as if he had been a police officer, or, rather, he scented them like a dog, and then, incapable of any lengthened effort, he murmured, resignedly:

"'She has gone, she has gone!'

"I was afraid that some accident had happened

to her; that she had fallen into some ravine and sprained herself, and I immediately sent all the men about the place off with orders to look for her until they should find her. They hunted for her all that night, all the next day, and all the week long, but nothing was discovered that could put us upon her track. I suffered, for I missed her very much; my house seemed empty, and my existence a void. And then, disgusting thoughts entered my mind. I feared that she might have been carried off, or even murdered; but when I spoke about it to Mohammed, and tried to make him share my fears, he invariably replied:

"'No; gone away.'

"Then he added the Arab word *r'eẓale*, which means gazelle, as if he meant to say that she could run quickly, and that she was far away.

"Three weeks passed, and I had given up all hopes of seeing my Arab mistress again, when one morning Mohammed came into my room, with every sign of joy in his face, and said to me:

"'*Mo'ssieuia*, Allouma has come back.'

"I jumped out of bed and said:

"'Where is she?'

"'She does not dare to come in! There she is, under the tree."

"And stretching out his arm, he pointed out to me, through the window, a whitish spot at the foot of an olive-tree.

"I got up immediately, and went out to where she was. As I approached what looked like a mere bundle of linen thrown against the gnarled trunk of the tree, I recognized the large, dark eyes, the

tattooed stars, and the long, regular features of that semi-wild girl who had so captivated my senses. As I advanced toward her, I felt inclined to strike her, to make her suffer—to have revenge, and so I called out to her from a little distance:

"'Where have you been?'

"She did not reply, but remained motionless and inert, as if scarcely alive, resigned to my violence, and ready to receive my blows. I was standing up close to her, looking in stupefaction at the rags with which she was covered, at those bits of silk and muslin, covered with dust, torn and dirty, and I repeated, raising my hand, as if she had been a dog:

"'Where have you come from?'

"'From yonder,' she said, in a whisper.

"'Where is that?'

"'From the tribe.'

"'What tribe?'

"'Mine.'

"'Why did you go away?'

"When she saw that I was not going to beat her, she grew rather bolder, and said in a low voice:

"'I was obliged to do it. I was forced to go, I could not stop in the house any longer.'

"I saw tears in her eyes, and immediately felt softened. I leaned over her, and when I turned round to sit down, I noticed Mohammed, who was watching us at a distance, and I went on, very gently:

"'Come, tell me why you ran away?'

"Then she told me that for a long time in her nomad's heart she had felt the irresistible desire to return to the tents, to lie, to run, to roll on the sand:

to wander about the plains with the flocks, to feel nothing over her head between the yellow stars in the sky and the blue stars in her face, except the thin, threadbare, patched stuff, through which she could see spots of fire in the sky, when she awoke during the night.

"She made me understand all that in such simple and powerful words, that I felt quite sure that she was not lying, and pitied her, and I asked her:

"'Why did you not tell me that you wished to go away for a time?'

"'Because you would not have allowed me.'

"'If you had promised to come back, I should have consented.'

"'You would not have believed me.'

"Seeing that I was not angry, she began to laugh, and said:

"'You see that is all over; I have come home again, and here I am. I only wanted a few days there. I have had enough of it now, it is finished and passed; the feeling is cured. I have come back, and have not that longing any more. I am very glad, and you are very kind.'

"'Come into the house,' I said to her.

"She got up, and I took her hand, her delicate hand, with its slender fingers, and triumphant in her rags, with her bracelets and her necklace ringing, she went gravely toward my house, where Mohammed was waiting for us. But before going in, I said:

"'Allouma, whenever you want to return to your own people, tell me, and I will allow you to go.'

"'You promise?'

"'Yes, I promise.'

"'And I will make you a promise also. When I feel ill or unhappy'—and here she put her hand to her forehead, with a magnificent gesture—'I shall say to you: "I must go yonder," and you will let me go.'

"I went with her to her room, followed by Mohammed who was carrying some water, for there had been no time to tell the wife of Abd-el-Kader-el-Hadara that her mistress had returned. As soon as she got into the room, and saw the wardrobe with the looking-glass in the door, she ran up to it, like a child does when it sees its mother. She looked at herself for a few seconds, made a grimace, and then, in a rather cross voice, she said to the looking-glass:

"'Just you wait a moment; I have some silk dresses in the wardrobe. I shall be beautiful in a few minutes.'

"And I left her alone, to act the coquette to herself.

"Our life began its usual course again, and I felt more and more under the influence of the strange, merely physical attractions of the girl, for whom, at the same time, I felt a kind of paternal contempt. For two months all went well, and then I felt that she was again becoming nervous, agitated, and low-spirited. So one day I said to her:

"'Do you want to return home again?'

"'Yes.'

"'And you did not dare to tell me?'

"'I did not venture to.'

"'Go, if you wish to; I give you leave.'

"She seized my hands and kissed them, as she did in all her outbursts of gratitude, and the same morning she disappeared.

"She came back, as she had come the first time, at the end of about three weeks, in rags, covered with dust, and satiated with her nomad life of sand and liberty. In two years she returned to her own people four times in this fashion.

"I took her back, gladly, without any feelings of jealousy, for with me jealousy can only spring from love, as we Europeans understand it. I might very likely have killed her if I had surprised her in the act of deceiving me, but I should have done it just as one half kills a disobedient dog, from sheer violence. I should not have felt those torments, that consuming fire — Northern jealousy. I have just said that I should have killed her like a disobedient dog, and, as a matter of fact, I loved her somewhat in the same manner as one loves some very highly bred horse or dog, which it is impossible to replace. She was a splendid animal, a sensual animal, an animal made for pleasure in the shape of a woman.

"I cannot tell you what an immeasurable distance separated our two souls, although our hearts perhaps occasionally warmed toward each other. She was something belonging to my house, she was part of my life, she had become an agreeable and regular requirement with me, to which I clung, and which the sensual man in me loved.

"Well, one morning, Mohammed came into my room with a strange look on his face, that uneasy look of the Arabs, which resembles the furtive look of a cat face to face with a dog, and when I noticed his expression, I said:

"'What is the matter, now?'

"'Allouma has gone away.'

"I began to laugh, and said: 'Where has she gone to?'

"'Gone away altogether, *mo'ssieuia!*'

"'What do you mean by *gone away altogether?* You are mad, my man.'

"'No, *mo'ssieuia.*'

"'Why has she gone away? Just explain yourself; come!'

"He remained motionless, and evidently did not wish to speak; then he had one of those explosions of Arab rage which make us stop in streets in front of two demoniacs, whose oriental silence and gravity suddenly give place to the most violent gesticulations and the most ferocious vociferations. I gathered, amid his shouts, that Allouma had run away with my shepherd, and when I had partially succeeded in calming him, I managed to extract the facts, one by one.

"It was a long story, but at last I gathered that he had been watching my mistress, who used to meet a sort of vagabond, whom my steward had hired the month before, behind the neighboring cactus woods, or in the ravine where the oleanders flourished. The night before, Mohammed had seen her go out without seeing her return, and he repeated, in an exasperated manner: 'Gone, *mo'ssieuia;* she has gone away!'

"I do not know why, but his conviction, the conviction that she had run away with this vagabond, laid hold of me irresistibly in a moment. It was absurd—unlikely, and yet certain in virtue of that very unreasonableness which constitutes feminine logic.

"Boiling over with indignation, I tried to recall the man's features, and I suddenly remembered having seen him the previous week, standing on a mound amid his flock, and watching me. He was a tall Bedouin, the color of whose bare limbs was blended with that of his rags; he was a type of a barbarous nomad, with high cheek-bones, and hooked nose, a retreating chin, thin legs, and a lean body in rags, with the shifty eyes of a jackal.

"I did not doubt for a moment that she had run away with that beggar. Why? Because she was Allouma, a daughter of the desert. A girl from the pavement in Paris would have run away with my coachman, or some thief in the suburbs.

"'Very well,' I said to Mohammed. Then I got up, opened my window, and began to draw in the stifling south wind, for the sirocco was blowing, and I thought to myself:

"'Good heavens! she is a woman, like so many others. Does anybody know what makes them act, what makes them love, what makes them follow, or throw over a man? You certainly do know occasionally; but often you don't, and sometimes you are in doubt. Why did she run away with that repulsive brute? Why? Perhaps, because the wind had been blowing regularly from the south for a month; that was enough; a breath of wind! Does *she* know, do *they* know, even the cleverest of them, why they act? No more than a weathercock that turns with the wind. An imperceptible breeze makes the iron, brass, zinc, or wooden arrow revolve, just in the same manner as some imperceptible influence, some undiscernible impression, moves the female heart and

urges it on to resolutions, no matter whether it be longs to town or country, to the suburbs, or to the desert.

"'They can then feel, provided that they reason and understand, why they have done one thing rather than another, but, for the moment, they do not know. They are the playthings of their own feelings, the thoughtless, giddy-headed slaves of events, of surroundings, of chance meetings, and of all the sensations with which their soul and their body tremble!'"

Monsieur Auballe had risen, and, after walking up and down the room once or twice, he looked at me, and said, with a smile:

"That is love in the desert!"

"Suppose she were to come back?" I asked him.

"Horrid girl!" he replied. "But I should be very glad if she did return to me."

"And you would pardon the shepherd?"

"Good heavens, yes! With women, one must always pardon—or else pretend not to see things."

THE OLD MAID

COUNT EUSTACHE D'ETCHEGORRY'S solitary country house had the appearance of a poor man's home, where people do not have enough to eat every day in the week, where the bottles are more frequently filled at the pump than in the cellar, and where they wait until it is quite dark before lighting the candles.

It was an old and miserable building; the walls were crumbling to pieces, the grated iron gates were eaten away by rust, the holes in the broken windows had been mended with old newspapers, but the ancestral portraits which hung against the walls showed that it was no tiller of the soil, nor miserable back-bent laborer whose strength had gradually worn out, that lived there. Great, knotty elm-trees sheltered it, as with a tall, green screen, and a large garden, full of wild rose-trees, of straggling plants, and of sickly looking vegetables, which sprang up half withered from the sandy soil, stretched down to the bank of the river.

From the house, one could hear the monotonous sound of the water, which at one time rushed yellow and impetuous toward the sea, and then again flowed back, as if driven by some invisible force toward the town, which could be seen in the distance, with its pointed spires, its ramparts, its ships at anchor by the side of the quay, and its citadel built on the top of a hill.

A strong smell of the sea came from the offing, mingled with the smell of pine logs, and of the large nets with great pieces of sea-weed clinging to them, which were drying in the sun.

Why had Monsieur d'Etchegorry, who did not like the country, who was of a sociable rather than of a solitary nature, for he never walked alone, but associated with the retired officers who lived there, and frequently played game after game of piquet at the *café*, when he was in town—why had he buried himself in such a solitary place, by the side of a dusty road at Boucau, a village close to the town, where on Sundays the soldiers took off their tunics, and sat in their shirt-sleeves in the public-houses, drinking the thin wine of the country, and teasing the girls?

What secret reason he had for selling the mansion which he had possessed at Bayonne, close to the bishop's palace, and condemning his daughter, a girl of nineteen, to such a dull, listless, solitary life, counting the minutes far from everybody, as if she had been a nun, no one knew. Most people said that he had lost immense sums in gambling, and had wasted his fortune and ruined his credit in doubtful speculations. They wondered whether he still regretted the tender, sweet woman whom he had lost, who died

one evening, after years of suffering, like a church lamp whose oil has been consumed to the last drop. Was he seeking for perfect oblivion, for that Nirvana in nature, in which a man becomes enervated and enveloped as with a moist, warm cloth? How could he be satisfied with such an existence — with the bad cooking, and the careless, untidy ways of a charwoman, and with the shabby clothes, discolored by use, that he had to wear?

His numerous relations had been anxious about it at first, had tried to cure him of his apparent hypochrondria, and to persuade him to do something. But as he was obstinate, avoided them, rejected their friendly offers with arrogance and self-sufficiency, even his brothers had abandoned and almost renounced him. All their affection had been transferred to the poor child who shared his solitude, and endured all her wretchedness with the resignation of a saint. Thanks to them, she had a few gleams of pleasure in her exile, was not dressed like a beggar girl, but received invitations, and appeared here and there at some ball, concert, or tennis party. The girl was extremely grateful to them for it all, although she would much have preferred that nobody should have held out a helping hand to her, but have left her to her dull life, without any day dreams or home-sickness, so that she might grow used to her lot, and day by day lose all that remained to her of her pride of race and of her youth.

With her sensitive and proud mind, she felt that she was not treated exactly as others were, in society, that people showed her either too much pity or too much indifference, that they knew all about her home

life of undeserved poverty, and that in the folds of her muslin dress they could smell the mustiness of her dwelling. If she was animated, or buoyed up with secret hopes in her heart, if there was a smile on her lips, and light in her eyes when she went out at the gate, and the horses carried her off to town at a rapid trot, she was all the more low-spirited and tearful when she returned home. She used to shut herself up in her room and find fault with her destiny, declaring to herself that she would imitate her father, show relatives and friends politely out, with a passive and resigned gesture, and make herself so unpleasant and embarrassing that they would grow tired of it in the end, would leave long intervals between their visits, and finally would not come to see her at all, but would turn away from her, as from some hospital where incurable patients were dying.

Nevertheless, the older the count grew, the more the supplies in the small country house diminished, and the more painful and harder existence became. If a morsel of bread was left uneaten on the table, if an unexpected dish was served up at table, if she put a piece of ribbon into her hair, he used to heap violent, spiteful reproaches on her, torrents of rage and vituperation and violent threats, like those of a madman who is tormented by some fixed idea. Monsieur d'Etchegorry had dismissed the servant and engaged a charwoman, whom he intended to pay merely by small sums on account, and he used to go to market with a basket on his arm.

He locked up every morsel of food, used to count the lumps of sugar and charcoal, and bolted himself in all day long in a room that was larger than the

rest, which for a long time had served as a drawing-room. At times he would be rather more gentle, as if he were troubled by vague thoughts, and used to say to his daughter, in an agonized voice, and trembling all over: "You will never ask me for any accounts, will you? You will never demand your mother's fortune?"

She always gave him the required promise, did not worry him with any questions, nor give vent to any complaints, and, thinking of her cousins, who would have good dowries, were growing up happily and peacefully amid careful and affectionate surroundings and beautiful old furniture, and were certain to be loved and to be married some day, she asked herself why fate was so cruel to some and so kind to others, and what she had done to deserve such disfavor.

Marie-des-Anges d'Etchegorry, without being absolutely pretty, possessed all the charm of her age, and everybody liked her. She was as tall and slim as a lily, with beautiful, fine, soft, fair hair, and eyes of a dark, undecided color, which reminded one of those springs in the depths of the forests, in which a ray of the sun is but rarely reflected — mirrors which changed now to violet, then to the color of leaves, but most frequently were of a velvety blackness. Her whole being exhaled the freshness of childhood, and an air that could not be described, but which was pleasant, wholesome, and frank.

She lived on through the years, growing up faithful to the man who might have given her his name, honorable, having resisted temptations and snares, worthy of the motto which used to be engraved on

the tombs of Roman matrons before the Cæsars: "She spun wool, and stayed at home."

When she was just twenty-one, Marie-des-Anges fell in love, and her beautiful, dark, restless eyes for the first time became illuminated with a look of dreamy happiness. For some one seemed to have noticed her; he waltzed with her more frequently than he did with the other girls, spoke to her in a low voice, dangled at her petticoats, and discomposed her so much that she flushed deeply as soon as she heard the sound of his voice.

His name was André de Gèdre; he had just returned from Sénégal, where after several months of daily fighting in the desert, he had won his sub-lieutenant's epaulets.

With his thin, sunburnt, yellow face, looking awkward in his tight coat, in which his broad shoulders could not expand themselves comfortably, and in which his arms, accustomed to cut right and left, were cramped in tight sleeves, he looked like one of those pirates of old, who used to scour the seas, pillaging, killing, hanging their prisoners to the yard-arms, and ready to engage a whole fleet, and who returned to port laden with booty, and occasionally with waifs and strays picked up at sea.

He belonged to a race of buccaneers or of heroes, according to the breeze which swelled his sails and carried him north or south. Over head and ears in debt, reduced to discounting doubtful legacies, to gambling at casinos, and to mortgaging the few acres of land that he still owned at much below their value, he nevertheless managed to make a pretty good figure in his hand-to-mouth existence. He never gave

in, never showed the blows that he had received, and waited for the last struggle in a state of blissful inactivity, while he sought for renewed strength and philosophy from the caressing lips of women.

Marie-des-Anges seemed to him to be a toy which he could play with as he liked. She had the flavor of unripe fruit; left to herself, and sentimental as she was, she would only offer a very brief resistance to his attacks, would soon yield to his will, and when he was tired of her and threw her off, she would bow to the inevitable and would not worry him with violent scenes, or stand in his way with threats on her lips. And so he was kind, and used to wheedle her, and by degrees enveloped her in the meshes of a net which continually hemmed her in closer and closer. He gained entire possession of her heart and confidence, without expressing any wish or making any promises, and managed so to establish his influence over her, that she did nothing but what he wished.

Long before Monsieur de Gèdre had addressed any passionate words to her, or any of those avowals which immediately introduce warmth and danger into a flirtation, Marie-des-Anges had betrayed herself with the candor of a little girl, who does not think she is doing any wrong, and cannot hide what she thinks, what she is dreaming about, and the tenderness which lies hidden at the bottom of her heart. She no longer felt that horror of life which had formerly tortured her. She no longer felt herself alone, as she had felt formerly — so alone, so lost, even among her own people, that everything had become indifferent to her.

It was very pleasant and soothing to love and to think that she was loved, to have a furtive and secret understanding with another heart, to imagine that he was thinking of her at the same time that she was thinking of him, to shelter herself timidly under his protection, to feel more unhappy each time she left him, and to experience greater happiness every time they met.

She wrote him long letters, which she did not venture to send him when they were written, for she was timid and feared that he would make fun of them. But she sang the whole day through like a lark that is intoxicated with the sun, so that Monsieur Etchegorry scarcely recognized her any longer.

Soon they made appointments together in some secluded spot, meeting for a few minutes in the aisles of the cathedral and behind the ramparts, or on the promenade of the *Alleés Marinés*, which was always dark, on account of the dense foliage.

And at last, one evening in June, when the sky was so studded with stars that it might have been taken for the triumphal route of some sovereign, strewn with precious stones and rare flowers, Monsieur de Gèdre went into the large neglected garden.

Marie-des-Anges was waiting for him in a somber walk, with witch-elms on either side, listening for the least noise, looking at the closed windows of the house, and nearly fainting, as much from fear as from happiness. They spoke in a low voice. She was close to him; he must have heard the beating of her heart, into which he had cast the first seeds of love, and he put his arms round her and clasped her gently, as if she had been some little bird that he was

afraid of hurting, but which he did not wish to escape.

She no longer knew what she was doing, but was in a state of entire, intense, supreme happiness. She shivered, and yet something burning seemed to permeate her whole being under her skin, from the nape of her neck to her feet, like a stream of flaming spirit. She would not have had the strength to disengage herself, or to take a step forward, so she leaned her head instinctively and very tenderly against André's shoulder. He kissed her hair, touched her forehead with his lips, and at last put them against hers. The girl felt as if she were going to die and remained inert and motionless, with her eyes full of tears.

He came nearly every evening for two months. She had not the courage to repel him or to speak to him seriously of the future, and could not understand why he had not yet asked her father for her hand, and had not fulfilled his former promises, until one Sunday, as she was coming from High Mass, walking on before her cousins, Marie-des-Anges heard the following words, from a group in which André was standing. He was the speaker:

"Oh! no," he said, "you are altogether mistaken; I should never do anything so foolish. One does not marry a girl without a half-penny; one takes her for one's mistress."

The unhappy girl mastered her feelings, went down the steps of the porch quite steadily, but feeling utterly crushed, as if by the news of some terrible disaster, and joined the servant, who was waiting for her, to accompany her back to Boucau.

The effect of what she had heard was to give her a serious illness, and for some time she hovered between life and death, consumed and wasted by a violent fever. When, after a fortnight's suffering, she grew convalescent, and looked at herself in the glass, she recoiled, as if she had been face to face with an apparition, for there was nothing left of her former self.

Her eyes were dull, her cheeks pale and hollow, and there were white streaks in her silky, light hair. Why had she not succumbed to her illness? Why had destiny reserved her for such a trial, and increased the unhappiness of her lot with disappointed hopes? But when that rebellious feeling was over, she accepted her cross, fell into a state of ardent devotion, became crystallized in the torpor of old-womanhood, tried with all her might to rid her memory of any recollections that had become incrusted in it, and to put a thick black veil between herself and the past.

She never walked in the garden now, never went to Bayonne, and would have liked to have choked and beaten herself, when, in spite of her efforts and of her will, she remembered her lost happiness, and when some sensual feeling and a longing for past pleasures agitated her body afresh.

That lasted for four years, which finished and altogether destroyed her good looks. She had gained the figure and the appearance of an old maid, when her father suddenly died, just as he was going to sit down to dinner. When the lawyer, who was summoned immediately, had ransacked the cupboards and drawers, he discovered a mass of securities, of bank-

notes, and of gold, which Count d'Etchegorry, who was eaten up with avarice, had amassed eagerly and hidden away. It was found that Mademoiselle Marie-des-Anges, who was his sole heiress, possessed an income of fifty thousand francs.*

She received the news without any emotion, for of what use was such a fortune to her now, and what should she do with it? Her eyes, alas! had been too much opened by all the tears that had fallen from them for her to delude herself with visionary hopes, and her heart had been too cruelly wounded to warm itself by lying illusions. She was seized by melancholy when she thought that in future she would be coveted, she who had been kept at arm's length as if she had been a leper; that men would come after her money with odious impatience; that now that she was worn out and ugly, tired of everything and everybody, she would most certainly have plenty of suitors to refuse, and that perhaps he would come back to her, attracted by that amount of money, like a hawk hovering over its prey,—would try to rekindle the dead cinders, to revive some spark in them, and to obtain pardon for his cowardice.

Oh! With what bitter pleasure she could have thrown those thousands into the road to ragged beggars, or scattered them about like manna to all who were suffering and dying of hunger, and who had neither roof nor hearth! She naturally soon became the target at which everyone aimed, the goal for which all those who had formerly disdained her most now eagerly tried.

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*$10,000.

It was not long before Monsieur de Gèdre was in the ranks of her suitors, as she had foreseen, and caused her that last heart-burning of seeing him humbled, kneeling at her feet, acting a comedy, trying every means to overcome her resistance, and to regain possession of that heart, now closed against him, after having been entirely his, in all its adorable virginity.

And Marie-des-Anges had loved him so deeply that his letters, in which he recalled the past, and stirred up all the recollections of their love, their kisses, and their dreams, softened her in spite of herself, and came across her profound, incurable sadness, like a passing light, the reflection of a bonfire, which, from a distance, illumes a prison cell for a moment.

He was poor himself, and had not wished, so he said, to drag her into his life of privation and shifts. She thought to herself that perhaps he had been right; and thus insensibly, like an indulgent mother or elder sister, who wishes to close her eyes and her ears against everything, to forgive again and forgive always, she excused him. She tried to remember nothing but those months of tenderness and of ecstasy, those months of happiness, and that he had been the first, the only man who, in the course of her unhappy, wasted life, had given her a moment's peace, a day dream of bliss, and had made her happy, youthful, and loving.

He had been charitable toward her, and she would be so a hundredfold toward him. So she grew happy again, when she said to herself that she would be his benefactress, that even with his hard heart he could not, without some feelings of gratitude and emotion,

accept the sacrifice from a woman, who, like so many others, might have returned him evil for evil, but who preferred to be kind and maternal, after having been in love with him.

And that resolution transfigured her, restored to her, temporarily, something of her vanished youth. A poor, heroic saint among saints, she took refuge in a Carmelite convent, so as to escape from this returning temptation, and bequeathed everything of which she could lawfully dispose to Monsieur de Gèdre.

THE SPECTER

IN SPEAKING of a recent lawsuit, our conversation had turned on sequestration, and each of us, thereupon, had a story to tell—a story affirmed to be true. We were a party of intimate friends, who had passed a pleasant evening, now drawing to a close, in an old family residence in the Rue de Grenelle. The aged Marquis de la Tour-Samuel, bowed 'neath the weight of eighty-two winters, at last rose, and leaning on the mantelpiece, said, in somewhat trembling tones:

"I also know something strange, so strange that it has been a haunting memory all my life. It is now fifty-six years since the incident occurred, and yet not a month has passed in which I have not seen it again in a dream, so great was and is the impression of fear it left on my mind. For ten minutes I experienced such horrible fright that, ever since, a sort of constant terror has made me tremble at unexpected noises, and objects half-seen in the gloom of night

inspire me with a mad desire to take flight. In short, I am afraid of the dark!

"Ah, no! I would not have avowed that before having reached my present age! Now I can say anything. I have never receded before real danger. So at eighty-two years of age, I do not feel compelled to be brave over an imaginary danger.

"The affair upset me so completely, and caused me such lasting and mysterious uneasiness, that I never spoke of it to anyone. I will now tell it to you exactly as it happened, without any attempt at explanation.

"In July, 1827, I was in garrison at Rouen. One day, as I was walking on the quay, I met a man whom I thought I recognized, without being able to recall exactly who he was. Instinctively, I made a movement to stop; the stranger perceived it and at once extended his hand.

"He was a friend to whom I had been deeply attached as a youth. For five years I had not seen him, and he seemed to have aged half a century. His hair was quite white, and he walked with a stoop as though completely worn out. He apparently comprehended my surprise, for he told me of the misfortune which had shattered his life.

"Having fallen madly in love with a young girl he had married her, but, after a year of more than earthly happiness, she died suddenly of heart failure. He had left his château on the very day of her burial and had come to live at Rouen. There he still dwelt, more dead than alive, desperate and solitary, exhausted by grief, and so miserable that he thought constantly of suicide.

"'Now that I have found you again,' said he, 'I will ask you to render me an important service. It is to go to my old home and get for me, from the desk of my bedroom—our bedroom—some papers which I greatly need. I cannot send a servant or an agent, as discretion and absolute silence are necessary. As for myself, nothing on earth would induce me to re-enter that house. I will give you the key of the room, which I myself locked on leaving, and the key of my desk—also a note to my gardener, telling him to open the château for you. But come and breakfast with me to-morrow, and we will arrange all that.'

"I promised to do him the slight favor he asked. For that matter, it was nothing of a trip, his property being but a few miles distant from Rouen and easily reached in an hour on horseback.

"At ten o'clock the following day I breakfasted, *tête-à-tête*, with my friend, but he scarcely spoke.

"He begged me to pardon him; the thought of the visit I was about to make to that room, the scene of his dead happiness, overwhelmed him, he said. He, indeed, seemed singularly agitated and preoccupied, as though undergoing some mysterious mental combat.

"At length he explained to me exactly what I had to do. It was very simple. I must take two packages of letters and a roll of papers from the first drawer on the right of the desk of which I had the key. He added, 'I need not beg you to refrain from glancing at them.'

"I was wounded at that remark, and told him so somewhat sharply. He stammered, 'Forgive me, I suffer so,' and tears came to his eyes.

"At about one o'clock I took leave of him to accomplish my mission.

"The weather was glorious, and I cantered over the turf, listening to the songs of the larks and the rhythmical striking of my sword against my boot. Then I entered the forest and walked my horse. Branches of the trees caressed my face as I passed, and, now and then, I caught a leaf with my teeth, from sheer gladness of heart at being alive and strong on such a radiant day.

"As I approached the château, I took from my pocket the letter I had for the gardener, and was astonished at finding it sealed. I was so irritated that I was about to turn back without having fulfilled my promise, but reflected that I should thereby display undue susceptibility. My friend's state of mind might easily have caused him to close the envelope without noticing that he did so.

"The manor seemed to have been abandoned for twenty years. The open gate was dropping from its hinges; the walks were overgrown with grass, and the flower-beds were no longer distinguishable.

"The noise I made by tapping loudly on a shutter brought an old man from out a door near by, who seemed stunned with astonishment at seeing me. On receiving my letter, he read it, reread it, turned it over and over, looked me up and down, put the paper in his pocket, and finally asked:

"'Well! what is it you wish?'

"I replied shortly: 'You ought to know, since you have just read your master's orders. I wish to enter the château.'

"He seemed overcome. 'Then you are going in —in her room?'

"I began to lose patience and said sharply: 'Of course; but is that your affair?'

"He stammered in confusion: 'No—sir—but it is because—that is, it has not been opened since—since the—death. If you will be kind enough to wait five minutes, I will go to—to see if—'

"I interrupted him, angrily: 'Look here, what do you mean with your tricks? You know very well you cannot enter the room, since I have the key!'

"He no longer objected. 'Then, sir, I will show you the way.'

"'Show me the staircase and leave me. I'll find my way without you.'

"'But—sir—indeed—'

"This time I silenced him effectually, pushed him aside, and went into the house.

"I first traversed the kitchen; then two rooms occupied by the servant and his wife; next, by a wide hall, I reached the stairs, which I mounted, and recognized the door indicated by my friend.

"I easily opened it and entered. The apartment was so dark that, at first, I could distinguish nothing. I stopped short, my nostrils penetrated by the disagreeable, moldy odor of long-unoccupied rooms. Then, as my eyes slowly became accustomed to the darkness, I saw plainly enough, a large and disordered bedroom, the bed without sheets, but still retaining its mattresses and pillows, on one of which was a deep impression, as though an elbow or a head had recently rested there.

"The chairs all seemed out of place. I noticed that a door, doubtless that of a closet, had remained half open.

"I first went to the window, which I opened to let in the light; but the fastenings of the shutters had grown so rusty that I could not move them. I even tried to break them with my sword, but without success. As I was growing irritated over my useless efforts, and could now see fairly well in the semi-obscurity, I renounced the idea of getting more light and went over to the writing-table.

"Seating myself in an armchair and letting down the lid of the desk, I opened the designated drawer. It was full to the top. I needed but three packages, which I knew how to recognize, and began searching for them.

"I was straining my eyes in the effort to read the superscriptions, when I seemed to hear, or rather feel, something rustle back of me. I paid no attention, believing that a draught from the window was moving some drapery. But, in a minute or so, another movement, almost imperceptible, sent a strangely disagreeable little shiver over my skin. It was so stupid to be affected, even slightly, that self-respect prevented my turning around. I had then found the second packet I needed and was about to lay my hand on the third when a long and painful sigh, uttered just over my shoulder, made me bound like a madman from my seat and land several feet away. As I jumped I had turned about, my hand on the hilt of my sword, and, truly, had I not felt it at my side, I should have taken to my heels like a coward.

"A tall woman, dressed in white, stood gazing at

me from the back of the chair where I had been sitting an instant before.

"Such a shudder ran through all my limbs that I nearly fell backward. No one can understand unless he has felt it, that frightful, unreasoning terror! The mind becomes vague; the heart ceases to beat; the entire body grows as limp as a sponge.

"I do not believe in ghosts, nevertheless I completely gave way to a hideous fear of the dead; and I suffered more in those few moments than in all the rest of my life, from the irresistible anguish of supernatural fright. If she had not spoken, I should have died, perhaps! But she spoke, she spoke in a sweet, sad voice, that set my nerves vibrating. I dare not say that I became master of myself and recovered my reason. No! I was so frightened that I scarcely knew what I was doing; but a certain innate pride, a remnant of soldierly instinct, made me, almost in spite of myself, maintain a creditable countenance.

"She said: 'Oh! sir, you can render me a great service.'

"I wanted to reply, but it was impossible for me to pronounce a word. Only a vague sound came from my throat.

"She continued: 'Will you? You can save me, cure me. I suffer frightfully. I suffer, oh! how I suffer!' and she slowly seated herself in the armchair, still looking at me.

"'Will you?' she said.

"I replied 'Yes' by a nod, my voice still being paralyzed.

"Then she held out to me a tortoise-shell comb, and murmured:

"'Comb my hair, oh! comb my hair; that will cure me; it must be combed. Look at my head—how I suffer; and my hair pulls so!'

"Her hair, unbound, very long and very black, it seemed to me, hung over the back of the chair and touched the floor.

"Why did I receive that comb with a shudder, and why did I take in my hands the long, black hair which gave to my skin a gruesomely cold sensation, as though I were handling snakes? I cannot tell.

"That sensation has remained in my fingers and I still tremble when I think of it.

"I combed her hair. I handled, I know not how, those icy locks. I twisted, knotted, and plaited, and braided them. She sighed and bowed her head, seeming to be happy. Suddenly she said: 'Thank you!' snatched the comb from my hands, and fled by the door that I had noticed ajar.

"Left alone, I experienced for several seconds the horrible agitation of one who awakens from a nightmare. At length I regained my full senses; I ran to the window, and with a mighty effort burst open the shutters, letting a flood of light into the room. Immediately I sprang to the door by which she had departed. I found it closed and immovable!

"Then a mad desire to flee came on me like a panic, the panic which soldiers know in battle. I seized the three packets of letters on the open secretary; ran from the room, dashed down the stairs, found myself outside, I know not how, and seeing my horse a few steps off, leaped into the saddle and galloped away.

"I stopped only when I reached Rouen and my

lodgings. There I shut myself into my room to reflect. For an hour I anxiously strove to convince myself that I had been the victim of an hallucination. I was about ready to believe that all I had seen was a vision, an error of my senses, when, as I approached the window, my eyes fell, by chance, upon my chest. Around the buttons of my uniform were entwined a quantity of long, black hairs! One by one, with trembling fingers, I plucked them off and threw them away.

"I then called my orderly, feeling unable to see my friend that day; wishing, also, to reflect more fully upon what I ought to tell him. I had his letters carried to him, for which he gave the messenger a receipt. He asked after me most particularly, and, on being told I was ill — had had a sunstroke — appeared exceedingly anxious. Next morning I went to him, determined to tell him the truth. He had gone out the evening before and not yet returned. I called again during the day; my friend was still absent. After waiting a week longer without news of him, I advised the authorities, and a judicial search was instituted. Not the slightest trace of his whereabouts or manner of disappearance was discovered.

"A minute inspection of the abandoned château revealed nothing of a suspicious character. There was no indication that a woman had been concealed there.

"After these fruitless researches all further efforts were abandoned, and in the fifty-six years that have elapsed since then I have heard nothing more."

THE RELIC

"To the Abbé Louis d'Ennemare, at Soissons:

"My Dear Abbé,—

"My marriage with your cousin is broken off in the stupidest manner, on account of a foolish trick which I involuntarily played my intended, in a fit of embarrassment, and I turn to you, my old schoolfellow to help me out of the difficulty. If you can, I shall be grateful to you until I die.

"You know Gilberte, or rather you think you know her, for do we ever understand women? All their opinions, their ideas, their creeds, are a surprise to us. They are all full of twists and turns, of the unforeseen, of unintelligible arguments, of defective logic, and of obstinate ideas, which seem final, but which they alter because a little bird comes and perches on the window ledge.

"I need not tell you that your cousin is very religious, as she was brought up by the *White* (or was it the *Black?*) *Ladies* at Nancy. You know that

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AFTER THE ORIGINAL DRAWING BY L. VALLET.

"You must find out what I should like best, do you hear?"

better than I do, but what you perhaps do not know is that she is just as excitable about other matters as she is about religion. She is as unstable as a leaf whirled away by the wind; and she is more of a girl than a woman, for she is moved or irritated in a moment, loves in a moment, hates in a moment, and changes in a moment. She is pretty, as you know, and more charming than I can say or you can guess.

"Well, we became engaged, and I adored her, as I adore her still, and she appeared to love me.

"One evening, I received a telegram summoning me to Cologne for a consultation, which might be followed by a serious and difficult operation. As I had to start the next morning, I went to wish Gilberte good-bye, and tell her that I should not dine with them on Wednesday, but on Friday, the day of my return. Ah! Take care of Fridays, for I assure you they are unlucky!

"When I told her that I had to go to Germany, I saw that her eyes filled with tears, but when I said I should be back very soon, she clapped her hands, and said:

"'I am very glad you are going, then! You must bring me back something; a mere trifle, just a souvenir, but a souvenir that you have chosen for me. You must find out what I should like best, do you hear? And then I shall see whether you have any imagination.'

"She thought for a few moments and then added:

"'I forbid you to spend more than twenty francs on it. I want it for the intention and for the remembrance of your penetration, and not for its intrinsic value.'

"And then, after another moment's silence, she said, in a low voice, and with downcast eyes:

"'If it costs you nothing in money, and if it is something very ingenious and pretty, I will—I will kiss you.'

"The next day, I was in Cologne. It was a case of a terrible accident, which had thrown a whole family into despair, and a difficult amputation was necessary. They put me up—I might almost say, they locked me up, and I saw nobody but people in tears, who almost deafened me with their lamentations. I operated on a man who appeared to be in a moribund state, and nearly died under my hands. I remained with him two nights, and then, when I saw that there was a chance of his recovery, I drove to the station. I had, however, made a mistake in the trains, and had an hour to wait, and so I wandered about the streets, still thinking of my poor patient, when a man accosted me. I do not know German, and he was totally ignorant of French, but at last I made out that he was offering me some reliques. I thought of Gilberte, for I knew her fanatical devotion, and here was my present ready to hand, so I followed the man into a shop where religious objects were for sale, and I bought *a small piece of a bone of one of the Eleven Thousand Virgins.*

"The pretended relic was inclosed in a charming old silver box, and that determined my choice. Putting my purchase into my pocket, I went to the railway station, and so to Paris.

"As soon as I got home, I wished to examine my purchase again, and on taking hold of it, I found

that the box was open, and the relic lost! It was no good to hunt in my pocket, and to turn it inside out; the small bit of bone, which was no bigger than half a pin, had disappeared.

"You know, my dear little Abbé, that my faith is not very great, but, as my friend, you are magnanimous enough to put up with my coldness, to leave me alone, and wait for the future, as you say. But I absolutely disbelieve in the relics of second-hand dealers in piety, and you share my doubts in that respect. Therefore, the loss of that bit of sheep's carcass did not grieve me, and I easily procured a similar fragment, which I carefully fastened inside my casket, and then I went to see my intended.

"As soon as she saw me, she ran up to me, smiling and anxious, and said to me:

"'What have you brought me?'

"I pretended to have forgotten, but she did not believe me, and I made her beg me, and beseech me, even. But when I saw that she was devoured by curiosity, I gave her the sacred silver box. She appeared overjoyed.

"'A relic! Oh! A relic!'

"And she kissed the box passionately, so that I was ashamed of my deception. She was not quite satisfied, however, and her uneasiness soon turned to terrible fear, and looking straight into my eyes, she said:

"'Are you sure that it is authentic?'

"'Absolutely certain.'

"'How can you be so certain?'

"I was caught, for to say that I had bought it through a man in the streets would be my destruc-

tion. What was I to say? A wild idea struck me, and I said, in a low, mysterious voice:

"'I stole it for you.'

"She looked at me with astonishment and delight in her large eyes.

"'Oh! You stole it? Where?'

"'In the cathedral; in the very shrine of the Eleven Thousand Virgins.'

"Her heart beat with pleasure, and she murmured:

"'Oh! Did you really do that for me? Tell me all about it!'

"There was an end of it, and I could not go back. I made up a fanciful story, with precise details. I had given the custodian of the building a hundred francs to be allowed to go about the building by myself; the shrine was being repaired, but I happened to be there at the breakfast time of the workmen and clergy; by removing a small panel, I had been enabled to seize a small piece of bone (oh! so small), among a quantity of others (I said a quantity, as I thought of the amount that the remains of the skeletons of eleven thousand virgins must produce). Then I went to a goldsmith's and bought a casket worthy of the relic; and I was not sorry to let her know that the silver box cost me five hundred francs.

"But she did not think of that; she listened to me, trembling, in an ecstasy, and whispering: 'How I love you!' she threw herself into my arms.

"Just note this: I had committed sacrilege for her sake; I had committed a theft; I had violated a shrine; violated and stolen holy relics, and for that she adored me, thought me loving, tender, divine. Such is woman, my dear Abbé, every woman.

"For two months I was the best of lovers. In her room she had made a kind of magnificent chapel in which to keep this bit of mutton chop, which, as she thought, had made me commit that love-crime, and she worked up her religious enthusiasm in front of it every morning and evening. I had asked her to keep the matter secret, for fear, as I said, that I might be arrested, condemned, and given over to Germany, and she kept her promise.

"Well, at the beginning of the summer she was seized by an irresistible wish to see the scene of my exploit, and she begged her father so persistently (without telling him her secret reason), that he took her to Cologne, but without telling me of their trip, according to his daughter's wish.

"I need not tell you that I had not seen the interior of the cathedral. I do not know where the tomb (if there be a tomb) of the Eleven Thousand Virgins is, and then, it appears that it is unapproachable, alas!

"A week afterward I received ten lines, breaking off our engagement, and then an explanatory letter from her father, whom she had, somewhat late, taken into her confidence.

"At the sight of the shrine, she had suddenly seen through my trickery and my lie, and had also found out that I was innocent of any other crime. Having asked the keeper of the relics whether any robbery had been committed, the man began to laugh, and pointed out to them how impossible such a crime was, but from the moment I had plunged my profane hand into venerable relics. I was no longer worthy of my fair-haired and delicate betrothed.

"I was forbidden the house; I begged and prayed in vain, nothing could move the fair devotee, and I grew ill from grief. Well, last week, her cousin, Madame d'Arville, who is also your relative, sent word that she should like to see me, and when I called, she told me on what conditions I might obtain my pardon, and here they are. I must bring Gilberte a relic, a real, authentic relic, certified to be such by Our Holy Father, the Pope, of some virgin and martyr, and I am going mad from embarrassment and anxiety.

"I will go to Rome, if needful, but I cannot call on the Pope unexpectedly and tell him my stupid adventure; and, besides, I doubt whether they let private individuals have relics. Could not you give me an introduction to some cardinal, or only to some French prelate, who possesses some remains of a female saint? Or perhaps you may have the precious object she wants in your collection?

"Help me out of my difficulty, my dear Abbé, and I promise you that I will be converted ten years sooner than I otherwise should be!

"Madame d'Arville, who takes the matter seriously, said to me the other day:

"'Poor Gilberte will never marry.'

"My dear old schoolfellow, will you allow your cousin to die the victim of a stupid piece of business on my part? Pray prevent her from being the eleventh thousand and one virgin.

"Pardon me, I am unworthy, but I embrace you, and love you with all my heart.

"Your old friend,

"Henri Fontal."

THE MARQUIS

IT WAS quite useless to expostulate when obstinate little Sonia, with a Russian name and Russian caprices, had said: "I choose to do it." She was so delicate and pretty, with her slightly turned-up nose and her rosy and childish cheeks. Every female perversity was reflected in the depths of her strange eyes, which were the color of the sea on a stormy evening. Yes, she was very charming, very fantastic, and above all, so Russian, so deliciously and imperiously Russian, the more so as she came from Montmartre. In spite of this, not one of the seven lovers who composed her usual court had laughed when their enslaver said one day:

"You know my feudal castle at Pludun-Herlouët, near Saint Jacut-de-la-Mer, which I bought two years ago, and in which I have not yet set foot? Very well, then! The day after to-morrow, which is the first of May, we will have a housewarming there."

The seven had not asked for any further explanation, but had accompanied little Sonia, and were now

ready to sit down to dinner under her presidency in the dining-room of the old castle, which was about ten hours' distant from Paris. They had arrived there that morning; they were going to have dinner and supper together, and were to start off again at daybreak next morning; such were Sonia's orders, and nobody had made the slightest objection.

Two of her admirers, however, who were not yet used to her sudden whims, had felt some surprise. But this was quickly checked by expressions of enthusiastic pleasure on the part of the others.

"What a delightfully original idea! Nobody else would have thought of such a thing! Positively, nobody else. Oh! these Russians!" But those who had known her for some time, and who had been consequently educated not to be surprised at anything, found it all quite natural.

It was half past six in the evening, and the gentlemen were going to dress. Sonia had made up her mind to keep on her morning-gown, or if she dressed, she would do so later. Just then, she was not inclined to move out of her great rocking-chair from which she could see the sun setting over the sea. The sight always delighted her very much. It might have been taken for a large, red billiard ball, rebounding from the green cloth. How funny it was! And how lucky that she was all alone to look at it, for those seven would not have understood it at all! Men never have any soul, have they?

The sunset was novel at first, but at length it made her sad, and Sonia's heart felt almost heavy, though the very sadness was sweet. She was congratulating herself more than ever on being alone, so

as to enjoy that languor which was like a gentle dream when, in perfect harmony with that melancholy and sweet sensation, a voice rose from the road beneath the terrace, a tremulous, but fresh and pure voice, and sang the following words to a slow melody:

"Walking in Paris,
Having a drink,
A friend of mine whispered;
What do you think?
If love makes you thirsty,
Then wine makes you lusty."

The sound died away, as the singer continued on his way, and Sonia was afraid that she should not hear the rest. That would have been terrible; so she jumped out of the rocking-chair, ran to the balustrade of the terrace, and leaning over it, she called out: "Sing it again! I insist on it. The song, the whole song!"

On hearing this, the singer looked round and then came back — without hurrying, however, and as if prompted by curiosity rather than by any desire to comply with her order. Holding his hand over his eyes, he looked at Sonia attentively, and she, on her part, had plenty of time to look closely at him.

He was an old man of about sixty-five, and his rags and the wallet over his shoulder denoted a beggar, but Sonia immediately noticed that there was a certain amount of affectation in his wretchedness. His hair and beard were not matted and ragged, as is usual with beggars, and evidently he had them cut occasionally. Besides he had a fine, and even distinguished face, as Sonia said to herself. But she did

not pay much attention to that, as for some time she had noticed that old men at the seaside nearly all looked like gentlemen.

When he got to the foot of the terrace the beggar stopped, wagged his head and said: "Pretty! The little woman is very pretty!" But he did not obey Sonia's order, and she repeated it, almost angrily this time, beating a violent tattoo on the stonework: "The song, the whole song!"

He did not seem to hear, but stood there gaping, with a vacant smile on his face, and as his head was inclined toward his left shoulder, a thin stream of saliva trickled from his lips on to his beard. His looks became more and more ardent. "How stupid I am!" thought Sonia suddenly. "Of course he is waiting for something." She felt in her pocket, in which she always carried some gold by way of half-pence, took out a twenty-franc piece and threw it down to the old man. He, however, did not take any notice of it, but continued looking at her ecstatically. He was only roused from his state of bliss by receiving a handful of gravel which she threw at him, right in his face.

"Do sing!" she exclaimed. "You must; I will have it; I have paid you."

Still smiling, he picked up the napoleon and threw it back on to the terrace, and then said proudly, though in a very gentle voice: "I do not ask for charity, little lady; but if it gives you pleasure, I will sing you the whole song, the whole of it, as often as you please." And he began the song again, in his tremulous voice, which was more tremulous than it had been before, as if he were much touched.

Sonia was overcome and unconsciously moved to tears; delighted because the man had spoken to her so familiarly, and rather ashamed at having treated him as a beggar. Her whole being was carried away by the slow rhythm of the melody, which related an old love story, and when he had ended he again looked at her with a smile. As she was crying he said to her:

"I daresay you have a beautiful horse, or a little dog that you are very fond of, which is ill? Take me to it, and I will cure it: I understand it thoroughly. I will do it *gratis*, because you are so pretty."

She could not help laughing:

"You must not laugh," he said. "What are you laughing at? Because I am poor? But I am not, for I had work yesterday, and again to-day. I have a bag full. See, look here!" And from his belt he drew a leather purse in which coppers rattled. He poured them out into the palm of his hand, and said merrily: "You see, little one, I have a purse. Forty-seven sous; forty-seven!"*

"So you will not take my napoleon?" Sonia said:

"Certainly not," he replied. "I do not want it; and then, I tell you again, I will not accept alms. So you do not know me?"

"No, I do not."

"Very well, ask anyone in the neighborhood. Everybody will tell you that the Marquis does not live on charity."

The Marquis! At that name she suddenly remembered that two years ago she had heard his story. It was at the time that she bought the property, and

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* About 47 cents.

the vendor had mentioned the Marquis as one of the curiosities of the soil. He was said to be half silly, at any rate an original, almost in his dotage, living by any lucky bits that he could make as horse-coper and veterinary. The peasants gave him a little work, as they feared that he might throw spells over anyone who refused to employ him. They also respected him on account of his former wealth and of his title, for he had been very rich, and really was a marquis. It was said that he had ruined himself in Paris by speculating. The reason, of course, was *women!*

At that moment the dinner bell began to ring, and a wild idea entered Sonia's head. She ran to the little door that opened on to the terrace, overtook the musician, and with a ceremonious bow she said to him: "Will you give me the pleasure and the honor of dining with me, Marquis?"

The old man left off smiling and grew serious: he put his hand to his forehead, as if to bring old recollections back, and then with a very formal, old-fashioned bow, he said: "With pleasure, my dear." And letting his wallet drop, he offered Sonia his arm.

When she introduced this new guest to them, all the seven, even to the best drilled, started. "I see what disturbs you," she said. "It is his dress. Well! It really leaves much to be desired. But wait a moment, that can soon be arranged."

She rang for her lady's maid and whispered something to her. Then she said: "Marquis, your bath is ready in your dressing-room. If you will follow Sabina she will show you to it. These gentlemen and I will wait dinner for you." And as soon as he had gone out she said to the youngest there: "And

now, Ernest, go upstairs and undress; I will allow you to dine in your morning coat, and you will give your dress coat and the rest to Sabina, for the Marquis."

Ernest was delighted at having to play a part in the piece, and the six others applauded. "Nobody else could think of such things; nobody, nobody!"

Half an hour later they were sitting at dinner, the Marquis in a dress coat on Sonia's left. It was a great disappointment for the seven. They had reckoned on having some fun with him, and especially Ernest, who being a wit, had intended to *draw him.* But at the first attempt of this sort, Sonia had given him a look which they all understood. Dinner began very ceremoniously for the seven, but merrily and without restraint between Sonia and the old man.

They cut very long faces, did the seven, but inwardly, if one may say so, for of course they could not dream of showing how put out they were. But the inward long faces grew longer still, when Sonia said to the old fellow, quite suddenly: "How stupid these gentlemen are! Suppose we leave them to themselves?"

The Marquis rose, offered her his arm again and said: "Where shall we go to?"—But Sonia's only reply was to sing the couplet of that song, which she had remembered:

"For three years I passed
The nights with my love,
On a beautiful couch
In a splendid alcove.
Though wine makes me sleepy,
Yet love keeps me frisky."

The seven, who were altogether exasperated this time, and could not conceal their vexation, saw the couple disappear through the door which led to Sonia's apartments.

"Hum!" Ernest ventured to say, "this is really rather strong!"

"Yes," the eldest of the menagerie replied. "It certainly is rather strong, but it will do! You know there is nobody like her for thinking of such things!"

The next morning, the château bell woke them up at six o'clock, the hour they had agreed on to return to Paris. The seven men asked each other whether they should go and wish Sonia good morning, as usual, before she was out of her room. Ernest hesitated more than any of them about it, and it was not until Sabina, her maid, came and told them that her mistress insisted upon it, that they could make up their minds to do so. They were surprised to find Sonia in bed by herself.

"Well!" Ernest asked boldly, "and what about the Marquis?"

"He left very early," Sonia replied.

"A queer sort of Marquis, I must say!" Ernest observed, contemptuously, and growing bolder: "Why, I should like to know?"

Sonia replied, drawing herself up. "The man has his own habits, I suppose!"

"Do you know, Madame," Sabina observed, "that he came back half an hour after he left?"

"Ah!" said Sonia, getting up and walking about the room. "He came back? What did he want, I wonder?"

"He did not say, Madame. He merely went upstairs to see you. He was dressed in his old clothes again."

Suddenly Sonia uttered a loud cry, and clapped her hands, and the seven came round to see what had caused her emotion.

"Look here! Just look here!" she cried. "Do look on the mantelpiece! It is really charming! Do look!"

And with a smiling, yet somewhat melancholy expression in her eyes, with a tender look which they could not understand, she showed them a small bunch of wild flowers, by the side of a heap of halfpennies. Mechanically she took them up and counted them, and then began to cry.

There were forty-seven of them.

A DEER PARK IN THE PROVINCES

It is not very long ago that an Hungarian Prince, who was an officer in an Austrian cavalry regiment, was quartered in a wealthy Austrian garrison town. The ladies of the local aristocracy naturally did everything they could to allure the new-comer, who was young, good-looking, animated, and amusing, into their nets, and at last one of these ripe beauties, who was now resting on her amorous laurels, after innumerable victories on the hot floors of Viennese society, succeeded in taking him in her toils. But only for a short time, for she had very nearly reached that limit in age where, on the man's side, love ceases and esteem begins. She had more sense, however, than most women, and she recognized the fact in good time. As she did not wish to give up the leading part which she played in society there so easily, she reflected as to what means she could employ to bind him to her in another manner. It is

well known that the notorious Madame de Pompadour, who was one of the mistresses of Louis XV. of France, when her own charms did not suffice to fetter that changeable monarch, conceived the idea of securing the chief power in the State and in society for herself, by having a pavilion in the deer park—which belonged to her, and where Louis XV. was in the habit of hunting—fitted up with every accommodation of a harem, where she brought beautiful women and girls of all ranks of life to the arms of her royal lover.

Inspired by such an historical example, the Baroness began to arrange evening parties, balls, and private theatricals in the winter, and, in the summer, excursions into the country. Thus she gave the Prince, who at that time was still, so to say, at her feet, the opportunity of plucking fresh flowers. But even this clever expedient did not avail in the long run, for beautiful women were scarce in that provincial town, and the few which the local aristocracy could produce were not able to offer the Prince any fresh attraction, when he had made their closer acquaintance. At last, therefore, he turned his back on these highly-born Messalinas, and began to bestow marked attention on the pretty women and girls of the middle classes, either in the streets or when he was in his box at the theater.

There was one girl in particular, the daughter of a well-to-do merchant, who was supposed to be the most beautiful girl in the capital. On her his opera glass was constantly leveled, and he even followed her occasionally without being noticed. But this modern Pompadour soon got wind of his unprincely

taste, and determined to do everything in her power to keep her lover and the whole nobility, which was also threatened, from such an unheard-of disgrace as the intrigue of a prince with a girl of the middle classes.

"It is really sad," the outraged Baroness once said to me, "that in these days princes and monarchs choose their mistresses only from the stage, or from the scum of the people. But it is the fault of our ladies themselves. They mistake their vocation! Ah! Where are those delightful times when the daughters of the first families looked upon it as an honor to become their prince's mistress?"

Consequently, the horror of the blue-blooded, aristocratic lady was intense when the Prince, in his usual, amiable, careless manner, suggested to her to people her deer park with girls of the lower orders.

"It is a ridiculous prejudice," the Prince said on that occasion, "which obliges us to shut ourselves off from the other ranks, and to confine ourselves altogether to our own circle, for monotony and boredom are the inevitable consequences of it. How many honorable men of sense and education, and especially how many charming women and girls there are, not of the aristocracy, who would infuse fresh life and a new charm into our dull, listless society! I very much wish that a lady like you would make a beginning, would give up an exclusiveness which cannot be maintained in these days, and would enrich our circle with the charming daughters of middle-class families."

A wish of the Prince's was as good as a command; so the Baroness made a wry face, but accommo-

dated herself to circumstances, and promised to invite some of the prettiest girls of the plebes to a ball in a few days. She really issued a number of invitations, and even condescended to drive to the house of each of them in person.

"But I must ask one thing of you," she said to each of the pretty girls, "and that is to come dressed as simply as possible; washing muslins will be best. The Prince dislikes all finery and ostentation, and he would be very vexed with me if I were the cause of any extravagance on your part."

The great day arrived. It was quite an event for the little town, and all classes of society were in a state of the greatest excitement. The pretty, plebeian girls, with the one whom the Prince had first noticed at their head, appeared in all their innocence, in plain, washing dresses, according to the Prince's orders, with their hair plainly dressed, and without any ornament except their own fresh charms. They were all captives in the den of the proud, aristocratic Baroness, and the poor little mice were very much terrified when suddenly the aristocratic ladies came into the ball-room, rustling in whole oceans of silks and lace, with their haughty heads changed into so many hanging gardens of Semiramis, loaded with all the treasures of the Indies, and radiant as the sun.

At first the poor girls looked down in shame and confusion, and the Baroness's eyes glistened with all the joy of triumph. But her ill-natured pleasure did not last long, for the intrigue on which the Prince's ignoble passions were to make shipwreck recoiled on the highly-born lady patroness of the deer park.

No, the aristocratic ladies in their magnificent toilettes did not throw the girls from the middle classes into the shade. On the contrary, these pretty girls in their washing dresses, and with the plain but splendid ornament of their abundant hair, looked far more charming than they would have looked in silk dresses and long trains, with flowers in their hair; and the novelty and unwontedness of their appearance there allured not only the Prince, but all the other gentlemen and officers, so that the proud granddaughters of heraldic lions, griffins, and eagles were quite neglected by the gentlemen, who danced almost exclusively with the pretty girls of the middle class.

The faded lips of the Baronesses and Countesses uttered many a "For shame!" but all in vain. Neither was it any good for the Baroness to make up her mind that she would never again put a social medley before the Prince in her drawing-room, for he had seen through her intrigue, and gave her up altogether. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

The Baroness, however, consoled herself as best she could.

AN ADVENTURE

"COME! Come!" said Pierre Dufaille, shrugging his shoulders. "Do you know what you are talking about, when you say that there are no more adventures? Say that there are no more adventurous men and you will be right! Yes, nobody takes a chance, in these days, for as soon as there is any slight mystery, or a spice of danger, they draw back. If, however, a man is willing to go into anything blindly and to run the risk of anything that may happen, he can still meet with adventures. Even I, who never look for them, met with one in my life, and a very startling one. Let me tell you of it.

"I was staying in Florence, and was living very quietly. All I indulged in, in the way of adventures, was to listen occasionally to the immoral proposals with which every stranger is beset at night on the Piazza della Signora, by some worthy Pandarus or other, with a head like that of a venerable priest.

These excellent fellows generally introduce you to their families, where debauchery is carried on in a very simple and almost patriarchal fashion, and where one does not run the slightest risk.

"One day as I was admiring Benvenuto Cellini's wonderful Perseus, in front of the Loggia dei Lanzi, I suddenly felt my sleeve pulled somewhat roughly. On turning round, I found myself face to face with a woman of about fifty who said to me with a strong German accent: 'You are French, Monsieur, are you not?'

"'Certainly, I am,' I replied.

"'And would you like to go home with a very pretty woman?'

"'Most certainly I should,' I replied, with a laugh.

"Nothing could have been funnier than the looks and serious air of the procuress, save the strangeness of the proposal, made in broad daylight, and in very bad French. It was even worse when she added: 'Do you know everything they do in Paris?'

"'What do you mean, my good woman?' I asked her, rather startled. 'What is done in Paris that is not done everywhere else?'

"However, when she explained her meaning, I replied that I certainly did not, and as I was not quite so immodest as the lady, I blushed a little. But not for long, for almost immediately afterward I grew pale, when she said: 'I want to assure myself of it personally.' And she said this in the same phlegmatic manner, which did not seem so funny to me now, but, on the contrary, rather frightened me.

"'What!' I said. 'Personally! You! Explain yourself!'

"If I had been rather surprised before, I was now altogether astonished at her explanation. It was indeed an adventure—almost like a romance. I could scarcely believe my ears, but this is what she told me.

"She was the confidential attendant on a lady moving in high society, who wished to be initiated into the most secret refinements of Parisian high life, and had done me the honor of choosing me for her companion. But then, this preliminary test!

"'By Jove!' I said to myself, 'this old German hag is not so stupid as she looks!' And I laughed in my sleeve, as I listened inattentively to what she was saying to persuade me.

"'My mistress is the prettiest woman you can dream of; a real beauty; springtime! A flower!'

"'You must excuse me, but if your mistress is really like springtime and a flower, you (pray excuse me for being so blunt) are not exactly that, and perhaps I should not exactly be in a mood to humor you, my dear lady, in the same way that I might her.'

"She jumped back, astonished in turn: 'Why, I only want to satisfy myself with my own eyes; not by injuring you.' And she finished her explanation, which had been incomplete before. All she had to do was to go with me to 'Mother Patata's' well-known establishment, and there to be present while I conversed with one of its fair and frail inhabitants.

"'Oh!' I said to myself, 'I was mistaken in her tastes. She is of course an old, shriveled-up woman, as I guessed, but she is a specialist. This is interest-

ing; upon my word! I never met with such a one before!'

"Here, gentlemen, I must beg you to allow me to hide my face for a moment. What I said was evidently not strictly correct, and I am rather ashamed of it; my excuse must be, that I was young, that Patata's was a celebrated place, of which I had heard wonderful things said, but the entry to which was barred me, on account of my small means. Five napoleons was the price! Fancy! I could not treat myself to it, and so I accepted the good lady's offer. I do not say that it was not disagreeable, but what was I to do? And then, the old woman was a German, and so her five napoleons were a slight return for our five milliards, which we paid them as our war indemnity.

"Well, Patata's boarder was charming, the old woman was not too troublesome, and your humble servant did his best to sustain the ancient glory of Frenchmen.

"Let me drink my disgrace to the dregs! On the next day but one after, I was waiting at the statue of Perseus. It was shameful, I confess, but I enjoyed the partial restitution of the five milliards, and it is surprising how a Frenchman loses his dignity when he is traveling.

"The good lady made her appearance at the appointed time. It was quite dark and I followed her without a word, for, after all, I was not very proud of the part I was playing. But if you only knew how fair that little girl at Patata's was. As I went along, I thought only of her, and did not pay any attention to where we were going. I was only roused from

my reverie by hearing the old woman say: 'Here we are. Try and be as entertaining as you were the day before yesterday.'

"We were not outside Patata's house, but in a narrow street running by the side of a palace with high walls, and in front of us was a small door, which the old woman opened gently.

"For a moment I felt inclined to draw back. Apparently the old hag was also ardent on her own account! She had me in a trap! No doubt she wanted in her turn to make use of my small talents! But, no! That was impossible!

"'Go in! Go in!' she said. 'What are you afraid of? My mistress is so pretty, so pretty, much prettier than the little girl of the other day.'

"So it was really true, this story out of 'The Arabian Nights?' Why not? And after all, what was I risking? The good woman would certainly not injure me, and so I went in, though somewhat nervously.

"My friend, what an hour I spent there! Paradise! It would be useless, impossible to describe it to you. Apartments fit for a princess, and one of those princesses out of fairy tales, a fairy herself. An exquisite German woman, exquisite as German women can be, when they try. An Undine of Heinrich Heine's, with hair like the Virgin Mary's, innocent blue eyes, and a skin like strawberries and cream.

"Suddenly, however, my Undine got up, and her face convulsed with fury and pride. Then, she rushed behind some hangings, where she began to give vent to a flood of German words, which I did not understand, while I remained standing, dumfounded. But

just then the old woman came in, and said, shaking with fear: 'Quick, quick; dress yourself and go, if you do not wish to be killed.'

"I asked no questions, for what was the good of trying to understand? Besides, the old woman, who grew more and more terrified, could not find any French words, and chattered wildly. I jumped up and got into my shoes and overcoat and ran down the stairs and into the street.

"Ten minutes later, I recovered my breath and my senses, without knowing what streets I had been through, nor where I had come from, and I stole furtively into my hotel, as if I had been a malefactor.

"In the *cafés* the next morning, nothing was talked of except a crime that had been committed during the night. A German Baron had killed his wife with a revolver, but had been liberated on bail, as he had appealed to his counsel, to whom he had given the following explanation, to the truth of which the lady companion of the Baroness had certified.

"She had been married to her husband almost by force; she detested him, and had some particular reasons (which were not specified) for her hatred of him. In order to have her revenge on him, she had had him seized, bound, and gagged by four hired ruffians, who had been caught, and who had confessed everything. Thus, reduced to immobility, and unable to help himself, the Baron had been obliged to witness a degrading scene, in which his wife caressed a Frenchman, and thus outraged conjugal fidelity and German honor at the same time. As soon as he was set at liberty, the Baron had punished his faithless wife, and was now seeking her accomplice."

"And what did you do?" some one asked Pierre Dufaille.

"The only thing I could do, by George!" he replied. "I put myself at the poor devil's disposal; it was his right, and so we fought a duel. Alas! It was with swords, and he ran me right through the body. That was also his right, but he exceeded his right when he called me her *ponce*. Then I gave him his change, and as I fell, I called out with all the strength that remained to me: 'A Frenchman! A Frenchman! Long live France!'"

THE BED

On a hot afternoon during last summer, the large auction rooms seemed asleep, and the auctioneers were knocking down the various lots in a listless manner. In a back room, on the first floor, two or three lots of old silk ecclesiastical vestments, were lying in a corner.

They were copes for solemn occasions, and graceful chasubles on which embroidered flowers surrounded symbolic letters on a yellowish ground, which had originally been white. Some secondhand dealers were there, two or three men with dirty beards, and a fat woman with a big stomach, one of those women who deal in secondhand finery and manage illicit love affairs, women who are brokers in old and young human flesh, just as much as they are in new and old clothes.

Presently, a beautiful Louis XV. chasuble was put up for sale, which was as pretty as the dress of a marchioness of that period. It had retained all its colors, and was embroidered with lilies of the valley

round the cross, and long blue irises, which came up to the foot of the sacred emblem, and with wreaths of roses in the corners. When I had bought it, I noticed that there was a faint scent about it, as if it were permeated with the remains of incense, or still pervaded by delicate, sweet scents of bygone years, by the memory of a perfume, the soul of an evaporated essence.

When I got it home, I wished to have a small chair of the same period covered with it; and as I was handling it in order to take the necessary measures, I felt some paper beneath my fingers. When I cut the lining, some letters fell at my feet. They were yellow with age, and the faint ink was the color of rust; outside the sheets, which were folded in the fashion of years long past, it was addressed in a delicate hand "To Monsieur l'Abbé d'Argence."

The first three letters merely settled places of meeting, but here is the third:

"My Friend,—I am very unwell, ill in fact, and I cannot leave my bed. The rain is beating against my windows, and I lie dreaming comfortably and warmly under my eider-down coverlet. I have a book of which I am very fond, and which seems as if it really applied to me. Shall I tell you what it is? No, for you would only scold me. Then, when I have read a little, I think, and will tell you what about.

"Having been in bed for three days, I think about my bed, and even in my sleep I meditate on it still. I have come to the conclusion that the bed comprehends our whole life; for we were born in it, we

live in it, and we shall die in it. If, therefore, I had Monsieur de Crébillon's pen, I should write the history of a bed, and what exciting and terrible, as well as delightful and moving, occurrences would not such a book contain! What lessons and what subjects for moralizing could one not draw from it, for everyone?

"You know my bed, my friend, but you will never guess how many things I have discovered in it within the last three days, and how much more I love it, in consequence. It seems to me to be inhabited, haunted, if I may say so, by a number of people I never thought of, who, nevertheless, have left something of themselves in that couch.

"Ah! I cannot understand people who buy new beds, beds to which no memories or cares are attached. Mine, ours, which is so shabby, and so spacious, must have held many existences in it, from birth to the grave. Think of that, my friend; think of it all; review all those lives, a great part of which was spent between these four posts, surrounded by these hangings embroidered by human figures, which have seen so many things. What have they seen during the three centuries since they were first put up?

"Here is a young woman lying in this bed.

"From time to time she sighs, and then she groans and cries out; her mother is with her, and presently a little creature that makes a noise like a cat mewing, and which is all shriveled and wrinkled, appears. It is a male child to which she has given birth, and the young mother feels happy in spite of her pain; she is nearly suffocated with joy at that first

cry, and stretches out her arms, and those around her shed tears of pleasure. For that little morsel of humanity which has come from her means the continuation of the family, the perpetuation of the blood, of the heart, and of the soul of the old people, who are looking on, trembling with excitement.

"And then, here are two lovers, who for the first time are together in that tabernacle of life. They tremble; but transported with delight, they have the delicious sensation of being close together, and by degrees their lips meet. That divine kiss makes them one, that kiss which is the gate of a terrestrial heaven, that kiss which speaks of human delights, which continually promises them, announces them, and precedes them. And their bed is agitated like the tempestuous sea, it bends and murmurs, and itself seems to become animated and joyous, for the maddening mystery of love is being accomplished on it. What is there sweeter, what more perfect in this world than those embraces which make one single being out of two, and which give to both of them at the same moment the same thought, the same expectation, and the same maddening pleasure, a joy which descends upon them like a celestial and devouring fire?

"Do you remember those lines from some old poet, which you read to me last year? I should like to have them embroidered on the top of my bed, where Pyramus and Thisbe are continually looking at me out of their tapestried eyes.

"And think of death, my friend, of all those who have breathed out their last sigh to God in this bed. For it is also the tomb of hopes ended, the door

which closes everything, after having been the entrance to the world. What cries, what anguish, what sufferings, what groans; how many arms stretched out toward the past; what appeals to a happiness that has vanished forever; what convulsions, what death-rattles, what gaping lips and distorted eyes, have there not been in this bed from which I am writing to you, during the three centuries that it has sheltered human beings!

"The bed, you must remember, is the symbol of life; I have discovered this within the last three days. There is nothing good except the bed, and are not some of our best moments spent in sleep?

"But then, again, we suffer in bed! It is the refuge of those who are ill and suffering; a place of repose and comfort for worn-out bodies, in one word, a part and parcel of humanity.

"Many other thoughts have struck me, but I have no time to note them down for you, and then, should I remember them all? Besides that I am so tired that I mean to shake up my pillows, stretch myself out at full length, and sleep a little. But be sure and come to see me at three o'clock to-morrow; perhaps I may be better, and able to prove it to you.

"Good-bye, my friend; here are my hands for you to kiss, and I also offer you my lips."

THE JENNET

EVERY time he held an inspection on the review ground, General Daumont de Croisailles was sure of a small triumph, and of receiving a whole packet of letters from women the next day.

Some would be almost illegible, scribbled on paper with a love emblem at the top by some sentimental milliner; the others ardent, as if flavored with spices, letters which excited him, and suggested the delights of kisses to him.

Among them, also, there would be some which evidently came from a woman of the world, who was tired of her monotonous life, had lost her head, and let her pen run on, without exactly knowing what she was writing—with mistakes in spelling here and there, which seemed to be in unison with the disordered beating of her heart.

He certainly looked magnificent on horseback; there was something of the fighter, something bold and mettlesome about him, "a valiant look," as our

grandmothers used to say, when they threw themselves into the arms of conquerors, in the interval between two campaigns. And this, too, despite the fact that these same conquerors had loud, rough voices, even when they were making love, as if they had to dominate the noise of the firing line. Their gestures were in keeping, as if they were using their swords and issuing orders, not wasting time over useless refinements and in squandering the precious hours in minor caresses, but sounding the charge immediately, and making the assault, without meeting with any more resistance than they met from a redoubt.

As soon as the General appeared, preceded by dragoons, sword in hand, amid the clatter of hoofs, the jingle of scabbards and bridles, plumes waving and uniforms glistening in the sun, a little in front of his staff, sitting perfectly upright in the saddle, and with his black-plumed cocked hat slightly on one side, the surging crowd, which was kept in check by the police officers, cheered him as if he had been some popular minister, of whose journey they had been notified by posters and proclamations.

The tumult of strident voices surging from one end of the great square to the other, and prolonged like the sound of the rising tide, which beats against the shore with ceaseless noise, the rattle of rifles and the sound of the music alternating with the blasts of trumpets all along the line, made the general's heart swell with unspeakable pride.

He attitudinized in spite of himself, and thought of nothing but ostentation and of being noticed. He continually touched his horse with his spurs, and

worried it so as to make it prance and rear, champ its bit, and cover itself with foam. Then he would continue his inspection, galloping from regiment to regiment with a satisfied smile, while the good old infantry captains, sitting on their thin Arab horses, with their toes well stuck out, said to one another:

"I should not like to have to ride a confounded, restive brute like that, I know!"

But the General's aide-de-camp, little Jacques de Montboron, could easily have reassured them. He knew those famous thoroughbreds, as he had had to break them in, and had received a thousand trifling instructions about them.

They were generally more or less spavined brutes, which he had bought at Tattersall's auctions for a ridiculous price, so quiet and well in hand that they might have been held with a silk thread, but with a good shape, bright eyes, and coats that glistened like silk. They seemed to know their part, and stepped out, pranced, and reared, and made way for themselves, as if they had just come out of the riding-school at Saumur.

That was his daily task, his obligatory service. He broke them in, one after the other, transformed them into veritable machines, accustomed them to bear the noise of trumpets and drums and of firing, without starting, tired them out by long rides the evening before every review, and bit his lips to prevent himself from laughing when people declared that General Daumont de Croisailles was a first-rate rider, who was really fond of danger.

A rider! That was almost like writing history! But the aide-de-camp discreetly kept up the illusion,

outdid the others in flattery, and related unheard-of feats of the General's horsemanship.

And, after all, breaking in horses was not more irksome than carrying on a monotonous and dull correspondence about the buttons on gaiters, or thinking over projects of mobilization, or going through accounts in which he lost himself like in a labyrinth. From the very first day that he entered the military academy at Saint-Cyr, he had taken to heart that sentence which begins the rules of the Interior Service:

"As discipline constitutes the principal strength of an army, it is very important for every superior to obtain absolute respect and instant obedience from his inferiors."

He did not resist, but accustomed himself thus to become a sort of Monsieur Loyal, spoke to his chief in the most flattering manner, and reckoned on being promoted over the heads of his fellow-officers.

General Daumont de Croisailles was not married and did not intend to disturb the tranquillity of his bachelor life as long as he lived. He loved all women, whether they were dark, fair, or red-haired, too passionately to love only one, who would grow old and worry him with useless complaints.

"Gallant," as they used to be called in the good old days, he kissed the hands of those women who refused him their lips, and as he did not wish to compromise his dignity and be the talk of the town, he had rented a small house just outside it.

It was close to the canal, in a quiet street, with courtyards and shady gardens. As nothing is less amusing than the racket of jealous husbands, or the screams of excited women who are disputing or rais-

ing their voices in lamentation, and as it is always necessary to foresee some unfortunate incident or other in the pursuit of love, some unlucky mishap, some absurdly imprudent action, some forgotten appointment, the house had five different doors.

So discreet, that he reassured even the most timid, and certainly not given to melancholy, he understood extremely well how to vary his kisses and his ways of proceeding. He knew how to work on women's feelings, and to overcome their scruples, to obtain a hold over them through their curiosity to learn something new, by the temptation of a comfortable, well-furnished, warm room, that was fragrant with flowers, and where a little supper was already served as a prologue to the entertainment. His female pupils would certainly have deserved first prize in a love competition.

Men mistrusted this ancient Lovelace as if he had been the plague. When they had plucked some rare and delicious fruit, or had sketched out some charming adventure, he always managed to discover the weak spot, and to penetrate into the place.

To some he held out the lure of festivity without danger, the desire of finishing their amorous education, of reveling in enjoyment, and to others he held out the irresistible argument that seduced Danaë, that of gold.

Others, again, were attracted by his cocked hat and feathers, and by the conceited hope of seeing him at their knees, of throwing their arms round him as if he were an ordinary lover instead of a general who rode so imposingly, who was covered with decorations, and to whom all the regiments presented

arms simultaneously, a chief whose orders could not be commented on or disputed, and who had such a martial and haughty look.

His pay, allowances, and his private income of fifteen thousand francs,* all went in this way, like water that runs out drop by drop from a cracked bottle.

He was continually on the alert for intrigues with the acuteness of a policeman. He followed women about, had all the impudence and all the cleverness of the fast man who has made love for forty years, without ever meaning anything serious, who knows all its lies, tricks, and illusions, and who can still march without halting on the road or requiring music to put him in proper trim. In spite of his age and gray hairs, he could have given a sub-lieutenant points, and was very often loved for himself, which is the dream of men who have passed forty, and do not intend to give up the game just yet.

There were not a dozen women in the town who could, without lying, have declared to a jealous husband or a suspicious lover that they had not, at any rate, once stayed late in the little house in the Eglisottes quarter, or could have denied that they had returned more thoughtful. Not a dozen, certainly, and, perhaps, not six!

Among that dozen or six, however, was Jacques de Montboron's mistress. She was a little marvel, that Madame Courtade, whom the captain had unearthed in an ecclesiastical warehouse in the Faubourg Saint-Exupère, and was not yet twenty. They had

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*$3000.

begun by smiling at each other and by exchanging long looks when they met, which seemed to ask for charity.

Montboron used to pass in front of the shop at the same hours, stopping for a moment with the appearance of a lounger loitering about the streets. Immediately her supple figure would appear, pink and fair, shedding the brightness of youth and almost of childhood around her, while her looks showed that she was delighted at the little incident of gallantry which dispelled the monotony and weariness of her life for a time, and gave rise to vague but delightful hopes.

Was love, that love which she had so constantly invoked, really knocking at her door at last and taking pity on her unhappy isolation? Did that officer, whom she met whenever she went out, as if he had been faithfully watching her — coming out of church or out for a walk in the evening — who said so many delightful things to her with his earnest eyes, really love her as she wished to be loved, or was he merely amusing himself because he had nothing better to do in their quiet little town?

But in a short time he wrote to her, and she replied to him. At last they managed to meet in secret, to make appointments, and to talk together.

She knew all the cunning tricks of a simple girl who has tasted the most delicious of sweets with the tip of her tongue, and acting in concert, and giving each other the word, so that there might be no awkward mistake, they managed to make the husband their unwitting accomplice, without his having the least idea of what was going on.

Courtade was an excellent fellow, who saw no further than the tip of his nose, incapable of rebelling, flabby, fat, steeped in devotion, and thinking too much about Heaven to see what a plot was being hatched against him in this unhappy vale of tears, as the psalters say.

In the good old days of confederacies, he would have made an excellent chief of a corporation; he loved his wife more like a father than a husband, considering that at his age a man ought no longer to think of such trifles, and that, after all, the only real happiness in life was to keep a good table and to have a good digestion; so he ate like four canons, and drank in proportion.

Only once during his whole life had he shown anything like energy—he used to relate the occurrence with all the pride of a conqueror, recalling his most heroic battle—and that was on the evening when he refused to allow the bishop to take his cook away, quite regardless of any of the consequences of such a daring deed.

In a few weeks the captain became his regular table companion, and his best friend. He had begun by telling him in a boastful manner that, in order to keep a vow that he had made to St. George, during the charge up the slope at Yron, in the battle of Gravelotte, he wished to send two censers and a sanctuary lamp to his village church.

Courtade did his utmost, and all the more readily, as this unexpected customer did not appear to pay any regard to money. He sent for several goldsmiths, and showed Montboron models of all kinds; the latter hesitated, however, and did not seem able to make

up his mind, discussed the subject, designed ornaments himself, gained time, and thus managed to spend several hours every day in the shop.

In fact, he was quite at home in the place, shook hands with Courtade, called him "my dear fellow," and did not wince when he took his arm familiarly before other people, and introduced him to his customers as, "My excellent friend, the Marquis de Montboron." He could go in and out of the house as he pleased, whether the husband was at home or not.

The censers and the lamp were sent in due course to Montboron's château at Pacy-sur-Romanche (in Normandy). When the package was undone, it caused the greatest surprise to Jacques's mother, who was more accustomed to receiving requests for money from her son, than ecclesiastical objects.

Suddenly, however, without rhyme or reason, little Madame Courtade became insupportable and enigmatical. Her husband could not understand it at all, and grew uneasy, and continually consulted his friend the captain.

Etiennette's character seemed to have completely changed; she found fifty pretexts for deserting the shop, for coming late, for avoiding *tête-à-têtes*, in which people come to explanations, become mutually irritated, and end in a reconciliation, amid a torrent of kisses.

She disappeared for days at a time, and soon Montboron, who was not fitted to play the part of Sganarelle, either by age or temperament, became convinced that his mistress was making him wear the horns, that she was hobnobbing with the General, and that she was in possession of one of the five keys of

the house in the Eglisottes quarter. As he was as jealous as an Andalusian, and felt a horror for that kind of pleasantry, he swore that he would make his rival pay a hundredfold for the trick which he had played him.

The fourteenth of July was approaching, when there was to be a grand parade of the whole garrison on the large review-ground. All along the paling, which divided the spectators from the soldiers, itinerant dealers had put up their stalls; there were mountebanks and fortune-teller's booths, menageries, and a large circus, which had gone through the town in caravans, with a great noise of trumpets and of drums.

The general had given Montboron instructions beforehand, for he was more anxious than ever to surprise people, to have a horse like an equestrian statue, an animal which should outdo that famous black horse of General Boulanger, about which the Parisian loungers had talked so much. He told Montboron not to mind what the price was, as long as he found him a suitable charger.

When the captain, a few days before the review, brought him a chestnut jennet, with a long tail and flowing mane, which would not keep quiet for five seconds, but kept on shaking its head, had extraordinary action, answered the slightest touch of the leg, and stepped out as if it spurned the earth, General Daumont de Croisailles showered compliments upon him, assured him that he knew few officers who possessed his intelligence and his value, and that he should not forget him when the proper time came for recommending him for promotion.

Not a muscle of the Marquis de Montboron's face moved, and when the day of the review arrived, he was at his post amid the staff that followed the General. The latter sat as upright as a dart in the saddle, and looked at the crowd to see whether he could not recognize some old or new female friend there, while his horse pranced and plunged.

He rode on to the review-ground, amid the increasing noise of applause, with a smile upon his lips. Suddenly, at the moment that he galloped up into the large square, formed by the troops drawn up in a line, the band of the Fifty-third Regiment struck up a quick march, and, as if obeying a preconcerted signal, the jennet began to turn round, and to accelerate its speed, in spite of the furious tugs at the bridle which the rider gave.

The horse performed beautifully, followed the rhythm of the music, and appeared to be acting under some invisible impulse. The general had a comical look on his face; he looked so disconcerted, rolled his eyes, and seemed to be the prey to such terrible exasperation, that he might have been taken for some character in a pantomime, while his staff followed, without being able to comprehend this fresh fancy of his.

The soldiers presented arms, the music did not stop, though the instrumentalists were much astonished at this interminable ride.

The general at last became out of breath, and could scarcely keep in the saddle, and the women in the crowded ranks of the spectators gave prolonged, nervous laughs, which made the old *roué's* ears tingle with excitement.

The horse did not stop until the music ceased, and then it kneeled down with bent head and put its nostrils into the dust.

It nearly gave General de Croisailles an attack of spleen, especially when he found out that it was his aide-de-camp's tit for tat, and that the horse came from a circus which was giving performances in the town. What irritated him all the more was that he could not even set it down against Montboron and get him sent to some terrible out-of-the-way hole, for the captain sent in his resignation, wisely considering that sooner or later he would have to pay the costs of that little trick, that the chances were against his obtaining any further promotion, and that he would remain stationary, like a cab which some cheat has left standing for hours at one end of an arcade while he has made his escape at the other.

UNDER THE YOKE

As he was a man of quiet and regular habits, of a simple and affectionate disposition, and had nothing to disturb the even tenor of his life, Monsieur de Loubancourt suffered from widowerhood more than most men do. He regretted his lost happiness, was angry with the fate which separated a united couple so brutally, the fate which had pitched upon a tranquil existence, whose sleepy quietude had not been troubled by any cares or chimeras, in order to rob it of happiness.

Had he been younger, he might, perhaps, have been tempted to form a new line, to fill up the vacant place, and to marry again. But when a man is nearly sixty such ideas make people laugh, for they have something ridiculous and insane about them. So he dragged on his dull and weary existence, shunned all those familiar objects which constantly recalled the past to him and flitted from hotel to hotel without taking interest in anything, or becoming intimate with anyone, even temporarily; in-

consolable, silent, enigmatic, and funereal in his eternal black clothes.

He was generally alone—though on rare occasions he was accompanied by his only son, who used to yawn by stealth, and seemed to be mentally counting the hours as if he were performing some hateful, enforced duty in spite of himself.

Two years of this crystallization slipped by and one was as monotonous and as void of incident as the other.

One evening, however, in a boarding-house at Cannes, where he was staying on his wanderings, a young woman dressed in mourning, a new arrival, sat next to him at dinner. She had a sad, pale face that told of suffering, a beautiful figure, and large, blue eyes with deep rings round them, which, nevertheless, were like stars in the twilight.

All remarked her, and although Loubancourt usually took no notice of women, no matter who they were, ugly or pretty, he looked at her and listened to her. He felt less lonely by her side, though he did not know why. He trembled with instinctive and confused happiness, just as if in some distant country he had found some female friend or relative, who at last would understand him, tell him some news, and talk to him in his dear native language about everything that a man leaves behind him when he exiles himself from home.

What strange affinity had thus thrown them together? What secret forces had brought their grief in contact? What made him so sanguine and so calm, and incited him to take her suddenly into his confidence, and urged him on to resistless curiosity?

She was an experienced traveler, who had no illusions, and was in search of adventure; one of those women who frequently change their name, and who, as they have made up their mind to swindle if luck is not on their side, play the continuous rôle of adventuress; one who could put on every accent; who for the sake of her purse could transform herself into a Slav, or into an American, or simply into a provincial; who was ready to take part in any comedy in order to make money, and not be obliged to waste strength and brains on fruitless struggles or on wretched expedients. Thus she immediately guessed the state of this melancholy sexagenarian's mind, and the illusion which attracted him to her. She scented the spoils which offered themselves to her without struggle, and divined under what guise she could make herself accepted and loved.

She initiated him into depths of griefs which were unknown to him, by phrases which were cut short by sighs, by fragments of her story, which she finished by a disgusted shrug of the shoulders and a heartrending smile, and by insensibly exciting his feelings. In a word, she triumphed over the last remaining doubts which might still have mingled with the affectionate pity with which that poor, solitary heart, so full of bitterness, overflowed.

And so, for the first time since he had become a widower, the old man confided in another person, poured out his old heart into the soul which seemed to be so like his own, which seemed to offer him a haven of cheer where the wounds of his heart could be healed. He longed to throw himself into those sisterly arms, to dry his tears, and to still his grief there.

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Monsieur de Loubancourt, who had married at twenty-five, as much from love as from judgment, had lived quietly and peacefully in the country, rarely visiting Paris. He was ignorant of female wiles and of the temptations offered by creatures like Wanda Pulska, who are made up of lies, and only care for pleasure, a virgin soil on which any evil will grow.

She attached herself to him, became his shadow, and by degrees, part of his life. She showed herself to be a charitable woman who devoted herself to an unhappy man, endeavored to console him, and in spite of her youth was willing to be his inseparable companion in his slow, daily walks. She never appeared to tire of his anecdotes and reminiscences, and she played cards with him. She waited on him carefully when he was confined to his bed, appeared to have no sex, in fact, transformed herself; and though she handled him skillfully, she seemed ingenuous and ignorant of evil. She acted like an innocent young girl, who has just been confirmed; but for all that, she chose dangerous hours and certain spots in which to be sentimental and to ask questions which agitated and disconcerted him, abandoning her slender fingers to his feverish hands, which pressed and held them in a tender clasp.

And then, there were wild declarations of love, prayers and sobs which frightened her; wild adieus, which were not followed by his departure, but which brought about a touching reconciliation and the first kiss; and then, one night, while they were traveling together, he opened the door of her bedroom at the hotel, which she had not locked, and came in like

a madman. There was the phantom of resistance, and the fallacious submission of a woman who was overcome by so much tenderness, who rebelled no longer, but who accepted the yoke of her master and lover. And then, the conquest of the body after the conquest of the heart, while she forged his chains link by link, with pleasures which besot and corrupt old men, and dry up their brains, until at last he allowed himself to be induced, almost unconsciously, to make an odious and stupid will.

Informed, perhaps, by anonymous letters, or astonished because his father kept him altogether at a distance from him and gave no signs of life, Monsieur de Loubancourt's son joined them in Provence. But Wanda Pulska, who had been preparing for that attack for a long time, waited for it fearlessly.

She did not seem discomposed at that sudden visit, but was very charming and affable toward the newcomer, reassured him by the careless airs of a girl, who took life as it came, who was suffering from the consequences of a fault, and did not trouble her head about the future.

He envied his father and grudged him such a treasure. Although he had come to combat her dangerous influence, and to treat the woman who had assumed the place made vacant by death — who governed her lover as his sovereign mistress — as an enemy, he shrank from his task, panted with desire, lost his head, and thought of nothing but treason and of an odious partnership.

She managed him even more easily than she had managed Monsieur de Loubancourt, molded him just as she chose, made him her tool, without even giving

him the tips of her fingers, or granting him the slightest favor, induced him to be so imprudent that the old man grew jealous, watched them, discovered the intrigue, and found mad letters in which his son stormed, begged, threatened, and implored.

One evening, when she knew that her lover had come in, and was hiding in a dark cupboard in order to watch them, Wanda happened to be alone in the drawing-room, which was full of light and of beautiful flowers, with this young fellow of five-and-twenty. He threw himself at her feet and declared his love, and besought her to run away with him. When she tried to bring him to reason and repulsed him, and told him in a loud and very distinct voice how she loved Monsieur de Loubancourt, he seized her wrists with brutal violence, and, maddened with passion, stammered out words of love and lust.

"Let me go," she cried, "let me go immediately. You are a brute to take advantage of a woman like that. Please let me go, or I shall call the servants to my assistance."

The next moment the old man, terrible in his rage, rushed out of his hiding place with clenched fists and a slobbering mouth, threw himself on the startled son, and pointing to the door with a superb gesture, said:

"You are a dirty scoundrel, sir. Get out of my house immediately, and never let me see you again!"

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The comedy was over. Grateful for such fidelity and real affection, Monsieur de Loubancourt married Wanda Pulska, whose name appeared on the civil register — a detail of no importance to a man who

was in love—as Frida Krubstein; she came from Saxony, and had been a servant at an inn. Then he disinherited his son, as far as he could.*

And now that she is a respectable and respected widow, Madame de Loubancourt is received everywhere by society in those places of winter resort where people's antecedents are rarely gone into, and where women of noble name, who are pretty and can waltz—like the Germans can—are always well received.

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* According to French law, nobody can altogether disinherit a child, and no son or daughter can be "cut off" with the proverbial "shilling."

A FASHIONABLE WOMAN

IT CAN easily be proved that Austria is far richer in talented men, in every domain, than North Germany, but while men are systematically drilled there for the vocation which they choose, just as Prussian soldiers are, with us they lack the necessary training, especially technical training, and consequently very few of them get beyond mere dilettantism. Leo Wolfram was one of these intellectual dilettantes, and the more pleasure one took in his materials and characters, which were usually taken boldly from real life, and woven into a certain political, and what is still more, a plastic plot, the more one was obliged to regret that Wolfram had never learned to compose or to mold his characters or to write — in one word, that he had never become a literary artist. But how greatly he had in himself the materials for a master of narration, his "Dissolving Views," and still more his "Goldkind,"* prove.

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*Golden Child.

"Goldkind" is a striking type of our modern society, and contains all the elements of a classic novel, although of course in a crude, unfinished state. What an exact reflection of our social circumstances Leo Wolfram gave in that story will be shown by our present reminiscences, in which a lady of that race plays the principal part.

Some ten years ago, four very stylishly dressed persons used to dine every day in a corner of the small dining-room of one of the best hotels in Vienna, and both there and elsewhere gave occasion for a great amount of talk. They were an Austrian landowner, his charming wife, and two young diplomatists, one of whom came from the North, while the other was a pure son of the South. There was no doubt that the lady came in for the greatest share of the general interest in every respect.

The practiced observer and discerner of human nature easily recognized in her one of those characters which Goethe has so aptly named "problematical." She was one of those individuals who are always dissatisfied and at variance with themselves and with the world, who are a riddle to themselves, and can never be relied on. With the interesting and captivating, though unfortunate contradictions of her nature, she made a strong impression on everybody, as well as by her mere outward appearance. She was one of those women who are called beautiful, without their being really so. Her face, as well as her figure, lacked æsthetic lines, but there was no doubt, that, in spite of that, or perhaps on that very account, she was the most dangerously fascinating woman that one could imagine.

She was tall and thin, and there was a certain hardness about her figure which became a charm through the vivacity and grace of her movements. Her features harmonized with her figure, for she had a high, clever, cold forehead, a strong mouth with sensual lips, and an angular, sharp chin, the effect of which, however, was diminished by her small, slightly turned-up nose, her beautifully arched eyebrows, and her large, animated, swimming blue eyes.

In her face, which was almost too full of expression for a woman, there was as much feeling, kindness, and candor as there was calculation, coolness, and deceit, and when she was angry and curled her upper lip, so as to show her dazzlingly white teeth, it had a devilish look of wickedness and cruelty. At that time, when women still wore their own hair, the beauty of her long, chestnut plaits, which she coiled on the top of her head like a crown, was very striking. Besides this, she was remarkable for her elegant and tasteful dresses, and for a bearing which blended with the dignity of a lady of rank, that indefinable something which makes actresses and women who belong to the higher classes of the *demi-monde* so interesting to us.

In Paris she would have been taken for a *demi-mondaine*, but in Vienna the best drawing-rooms were open to her, and she was not looked upon as more respectable or less respectable than any other aristocratic beauties.

Her husband belonged to that class of men whom the witty Balzac so delightfully calls *les hommes prédestinés* in his "Physiologie du Mariage." Without doubt, he was a very good-looking man, but he bore

that stamp of insignificance which often conceals coarseness and vulgarity, and was one of those men who, in the long run, become unendurable to a woman of refined tastes. He had a good private income, but his wife understood the art of enjoying life, and so a deficit in the yearly accounts of the young couple became the rule, without causing the lively lady to check her noble passions in the least on that account. She kept horses and carriages, rode with the greatest boldness, had her box at the opera, and gave beautiful little suppers, which at that time was the fad among Viennese women of her class.

One of the two young diplomats who accompanied her, a young Count, belonging to a well-known family in North Germany, a perfect gentleman in the highest sense of the word, was looked upon as her adorer, while the other, the Count's most intimate friend, in spite of his ancient name and his position as *attaché* to a foreign legation, gave people a distinct impression that he was an adventurer of the sort the police watch closely. He had the reputation of being an unscrupulous and dangerous duelist. Short, thin, with a yellow complexion, with strongly-marked but engaging features, an aquiline nose, and bright, dark eyes, he was the typical picture of a man who seduces women and kills men.

The lady appeared to be in love with the Count, and to take an interest in his friend. At least, that was the construction that the others in the dining-room put upon the situation, so far as it could be made out from the behavior and looks of the people concerned,—especially from their looks, for it was

strange how devotedly and ardently the beautiful woman's blue eyes would rest on the Count, and with what wild, diabolical intensity she would gaze at the Italian from time to time. It was hard to guess whether there was more love or more hatred in that glance. None of the four, however, who were then dining and chatting so gaily together, had any presentiment that they were amusing themselves over a mine, which might explode at any moment, and bury them all.

It was the husband who provided the tinder. One day he told her that she must make up her mind to the most rigid retrenchment, must give up her box at the opera and sell her carriage and horses, if she did not wish to risk her whole position in society. His creditors had lost all patience, and were threatening to distrain on his property, and even to put him in prison. She made no reply to this revelation, but during dinner she said to the Count, in a whisper, that she must speak to him later, and would, therefore, come to see him at his house. When it was dark she came thickly veiled, and after she had responded to his demonstrations of affection for some time, with more patience than amiableness, she began (their conversation is extracted from his diary):

"You are so unconcerned and happy, while misery and disgrace are threatening me!"

"Please explain what you mean!"

"I have incurred some debts."

"Again?" he said reproachfully; then he added: "Why do you not come to me at once, for you must do it in the end, and then at least you would avoid any exposure?"

"Please do not take me to task," she replied; "you know it only makes me angry. I want some money; can you give me some?"

"How much do you want?"

She hesitated, for she had not the courage to name the real amount, but at last she said, in a low voice:

"Five thousand florins.*"

It was evidently only a small portion of what she really required, so he replied:

"I am sure you want more than that!"

"No."

"Really not?"

"Do not make me angry."

He shrugged his shoulders, went to his strong box, and gave her the money, whereupon she nodded, and giving him her hand, she said: "You are always kind, and as long as I have you, I am not afraid; but if I were to lose you, I should be the most unhappy woman in the world."

"You always have the same fears; but I shall never leave you; it would be impossible for me to separate from you," the Count exclaimed.

"And if you die?" she interrupted him hastily.

"If I die?" the Count said with a peculiar smile. "I have provided for you in that eventuality also."

"Do you mean to say," she stammered, flushing, and her large, lovely eyes rested on her lover with an indescribable expression in them. He, however, opened a drawer in his writing-table and took out a document, which he gave her. It was his will. She opened it with almost indecent haste, and when she

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* About $2500, nominally.

saw the amount—thirty thousand florins—she grew pale to her very lips.

That moment the germs of a crime were sown in her breast, but one of those crimes which cannot be touched by the Criminal Code. A few days after she had paid her visit to the Count, she herself received one from the Italian. In the course of conversation he took a jewel case out of his breast pocket, asked her opinion of the ornaments, as she was well known for her taste in such matters, and told her at the same time that it was intended as a present for an actress, with whom he was on intimate terms.

"It is a magnificent set!" she said, as she looked at it. "You have made an excellent selection." Then she suddenly became absorbed in thought, while her nostrils began to quiver, and that touch of cold cruelty played on her lips.

"Do you think that the lady for whom this ornament is intended will be pleased with it?" asked the Italian.

"Certainly," she replied; "I myself would give a great deal to have it."

"Then may I venture to offer it to you?" the Italian said.

She blushed, but did not refuse it. The same evening she rushed into her lover's room in a state of the greatest excitement.

"I am beside myself," she stammered; "I have been most deeply insulted."

"By whom?" the Count asked, excitedly.

"By your friend, who has dared to send me some jewelry to-day. I suppose he looks upon me as a lost woman; perhaps I am already looked upon as belong-

ing to the *demi-monde*, and this I owe to you, to you alone, and to my mad love for you, to which I have sacrificed my honor and everything—everything!"

She threw herself down and sobbed. and would not be pacified until the Count gave her his word of honor that he would set aside every consideration for his friend, and obtain satisfaction for her at any price. He met the Italian the same evening at a card party and questioned him.

"I did not, in the first place, send the lady the jewelry, but gave it to her myself—not, however, until she had asked me to do so."

"That is a shameful lie!" the Count shouted, furiously. Unfortunately, there were others present, and his friend took the matter seriously, so the next morning he sent his seconds to the Count.

Some of their real friends tried to settle the matter in another way, but his bad angel, his mistress, who required thirty thousand florins, drove the Count to his death. He was found in the Prater, with his friend's bullet in his chest. A letter in his pocket spoke of suicide, but the police did not doubt for a moment that a duel had taken place. Suspicion soon fell on the Italian, but when they went to arrest him, he had already made his escape.

The husband of the beautiful, problematical woman called on the dead man's broken-hearted father, who had hastened to Vienna on receipt of a telegraphic message, a few hours after his arrival, and demanded the money.

"My wife was your son's most intimate friend," he stammered, in embarrassment, in order to justify his action as well as he could.

"Oh! I know that," the old Count replied, "and female friends of that kind want to be paid immediately, and in full. Here are the thirty thousand florins."

And our "Goldkind?" She paid her debts, and then withdrew from the scene for a while. She had been compromised, certainly — but then, she had risen in value in the eyes of those numerous men who can only adore and sacrifice themselves for a woman when her foot is on the threshold of vice and crime.

I saw her last during the Franco-German war, in the beautiful Mirabell-garden at Salzburg. She did not seem to feel any qualms of conscience, for she had become considerably stouter, which made her more attractive, more beautiful, and consequently, more dangerous, than before.

WORDS OF LOVE

"SUNDAY, ———

"You do not write to me, I never see you, you never come, so I must suppose that you have ceased to love me. But why? What have I done? Pray tell me, my own dear love. I love you so much, so dearly! I should like always to have you near me, to kiss you all day while I call you every tender name that I could think of. I adore you, I adore you, I adore you, my beautiful cock. Your affectionate hen. "SOPHIE."

"MONDAY, ———

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

"You will understand absolutely nothing of what I am going to say to you, but that does not matter, and if my letter happens to be read by another woman, it may be profitable to her.

"Had you been deaf and dumb, I should no doubt have loved you for a very long time, and the cause of what has happened is that you can talk; that is all.

"In love, you see, dreams are always made to sing, but in order that they may do so, they must

not be interrupted, and when one talks between two kisses, one always interrupts that frenzied dream which our souls indulge in, that is, unless they utter sublime words; and sublime words do not come out of the little mouths of pretty girls.

"You do not understand me at all, do you? So much the better; I will go on. You are certainly one of the most charming and adorable women I have ever seen.

"Are there any eyes on earth that contain more dreams than yours, more unknown promises, greater depths of love? I do not think so. And when that mouth of yours, with its two curved lips, smiles and shows the ivory gates within, one is tempted to say that from this ravishing mouth comes ineffable music, something inexpressibly delicate, a sweetness which extorts sighs.

"It is then that you speak to me, and that is what troubles me, don't you see, troubles me more than tongue can tell. I would much prefer never to see you at all.

"You go on pretending not to understand anything, do you not? But I calculated on that.

"Do you remember the first time you came to see me at my residence? How gaily you stepped inside, an odor of violets, which clung to your skirts, heralding your entrance; how we looked at each other, for ever so long, without uttering a word, after which we embraced like two fools. Then from that time to the end we never exchanged a word.

"But when we separated, did not our trembling hands and our eyes say many things, things which cannot be expressed in any language. At least, I

thought so; and when you went away, you murmured:

"'We shall meet again soon!'

"That was all you said, and you will never guess what delightful dreams you left me, all that I, as it were, caught a glimpse of, all that I fancied I could guess in your thoughts.

"You see, my poor child, for men who are not stupid, who are rather refined and somewhat superior, love is such a complicated instrument that the merest trifle puts it out of order. You women never perceive the ridiculous side of certain things when you love, and you fail to see the grotesqueness of some expressions.

"Why does a word which sounds quite right in the mouth of a small, dark woman seem quite wrong and funny in the mouth of a fat, light-haired woman? Why are the wheedling ways of the one altogether out of place in the other?

"Why is it that certain caresses which are delightful from the one should be wearisome from the other? Why? Because in everything, and especially in love, perfect harmony — absolute agreement in motion, voice, words, and in demonstrations of tenderness, is necessary in the person who moves, speaks, and manifests affection; harmony is necessary in age, in height, in the color of the hair, and in the style of beauty.

"If a woman of thirty-five, who has arrived at the age of violent tempestuous passion, were to preserve the slightest traces of the caressing archness of her love affairs at twenty, were not to understand that she ought to express herself differently, look at her

lover differently and kiss him differently, were not to see that she ought to be a Dido and not a Juliette, she would infallibly disgust nine lovers out of ten, even if they could not account to themselves for their estrangement. Do you understand me? No? I hoped so.

"From the time that you gave rein to your tenderness, it was all over for me, my dear friend. Sometimes we would embrace for five minutes, in one interminable kiss, one of those kisses which make lovers close their eyes, lest part of it should escape through their looks, as if to preserve it entire in the clouded soul which it is ravaging. And then, when our lips separated, you would say to me:

"'That was nice, you fat old dog.'

"At such moments, I could have beaten you; for you gave me successively all the names of animals and vegetables which you doubtless found in some cookery book, or gardener's manual. But that is nothing.

"The caresses of love are brutal, bestial, and if one comes to think of it, grotesque! Oh! My poor child, what joking elf, what perverse sprite could have prompted the concluding words of your letter to me? I have made a collection of them, but out of love for you, I will not show them to you.

"And sometimes you really said things which were quite inopportune. For instance you managed now and then to let out an exalted *I love you!* on such singular occasions that I was obliged to restrain a strong desire to laugh. There are times when the words *I love you!* are so out of place that they become indecorous; let me tell you that.

"But you do not understand me, and many other women also will not understand me, but think me stupid, though that matters very little to me. Hungry men eat like gluttons, but people of refinement are disgusted at it and often feel an invincible dislike for a dish, on account of a mere trifle. It is the same with love, as with cookery.

"What I cannot comprehend for example is that certain women who fully understand the irresistible attraction of fine, embroidered stockings, the exquisite charm of shades, the witchery of valuable lace concealed in the depths of their underclothing, the exciting zest of hidden luxury, and all the subtle delicacies of female elegance, never understand the invincible disgust with which words that are out of place, or foolishly tender, inspire us.

"At times coarse and brutal expressions work wonders, as they excite the senses and make the heart beat, and they are allowable at the hours of combat. Is not that sentence of Cambronne's sublime?*

"Nothing shocks us that comes at the right time; but then, we must also know when to hold our tongue, and to avoid phrases *à la Paul de Kock*, at certain moments.

"And I embrace you passionately, on the condition that you say nothing.

"René."

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*At Waterloo, General Cambronne is reported to have said, when called on to surrender: "The Guard dies, but does not surrender." But according to Victor Hugo, in "Les Misérables," he used the expression "*Merde!*" which cannot be put into English fit for ears polite.

THE UPSTART

You know good-natured, stout Dupontel, who looks like the type of a happy man, with fat cheeks the color of ripe apples, a small, reddish mustache, turned up over his thick lips, prominent eyes, which never know any emotion or sorrow, and remind one of the calm eyes of cows and oxen, and a long back fixed on to two little wriggling, crooked legs, which have obtained for him the nickname of "corkscrew" from some nymph of the ballet.

Dupontel, who had taken the trouble to be born, but not like the grand seigneurs whom Beaumarchais made fun of once upon a time, was ballasted with a respectable number of millions, as befitted the sole heir of a house that had sold household utensils and appliances for over a century.

Naturally, like every other upstart who respects himself, he wished to appear to be something, to be known as a clubman, and to play to the gallery, because he had been educated at Vaugirard and knew a

little English, had gone through his voluntary service in the army for twelve months* at Rouen; was a tolerable singer, could drive a four-in-hand, and play lawn-tennis.

Always studiously well-dressed, correct in every way, he copied his way of speaking, his hats, and his trousers from the three or four snobs who set the fashion, reproduced other people's witticisms, learned anecdotes and jokes by heart, like a lesson, to use them again at small parties, constantly laughed, without knowing why his friends burst into roars of merriment, and was in the habit of keeping pretty girls for the pleasure of his best friends. Of course, he was a perfect fool, but after all, was a capital fellow, to whom it was only right to extend a good deal of indulgence.

When he had taken his thirty-first mistress, and had made the discovery that in love money does not create happiness two-thirds of the time, that they had all deceived him, and made him perfectly ridiculous at the end of a week, Charles Dupontel made up his mind to settle down as a respectable married man, and to marry not from calculation or from reason, but for love.

One autumn afternoon, at Auteuil, he noticed in front of the club stand, among a number of pretty women who were standing round the braziers, a girl with such a lovely, delicate complexion that it looked

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* Although, in France, as in Germany, military service is compulsory, men are allowed to serve in both countries as *one-year volunteers;* they enjoy certain privileges, find their own uniform, etc., which entails, of course, considerable expense.

like apple blossoms. Her hair was like threads of gold, and she was so slight and supple that she reminded him of those outlines of saints which one sees in old stained glass in church windows. There was also something enigmatical about her, for she had the delightfully ingenuous look of a schoolgirl during the holidays, combined with the *savoir faire* of some enlightened young lady, who already knows the how and the why of every thing, who is exuberant with youth and life, and who is eagerly waiting for the moment when marriage will at length allow her to say and to do everything that comes into her head, and to amuse herself to satiety.

Then she had such small feet that they would have gone into a woman's hand, a waist that could have been clasped by a bracelet, turned-up eyelashes, which fluttered like the wings of a butterfly, an impudent and saucy nose, and a vague mocking smile that made folds in her lips, like the petals of a rose.

Her father was a member of the Jockey Club. He was generally "cleaned out," as they call it, in the great races, but managed by his coolness and wit to keep himself afloat. He belonged to a race which could prove that his ancestors had been at the Court of Charlemagne, and not as musicians or cooks, as some people declared.

Her youth and beauty, and her father's pedigree, dazzled Dupontel, upset his brain, and altogether turned him upside down. The combination seemed to him to be a mirage of happiness and of pride of family.

He got introduced to her father at the end of a game of *baccarat*, invited him to shoot with him, and

a month later, as if it were an affair to be hurried over, he asked for and obtained the hand of Mademoiselle Thérèse de Montsaigne. Then he felt as happy as a miner who has discovered a vein of precious metal.

The young woman did not require more than twenty-four hours to discover that her husband was nothing but a ridiculous puppet, and immediately set about to consider how she might best escape from her cage, and befool the poor fellow, who loved her with all his heart.

She deceived him without the least pity or the slightest scruple; she did it as if from instinctive hatred, as if it were a necessity for her not only to make him ridiculous, but also to forget that she ought to sacrifice her virgin dreams to him, to belong to him, and to submit to his hateful caresses without being able to repel him.

She was cruel, like all women are when they do not love, and delighted in doing audacious and absurd things, in visiting everything, and in braving danger. She seemed like a young colt intoxicated with the sun, the air, and its liberty, which gallops wildly across the meadows, jumps hedges and ditches, kicks, and whinnies joyously, and rolls about in the long, sweet grass.

But Dupontel remained quite imperturbable; he had not the slightest suspicion, and was the first to laugh when anybody told him some good story of a husband who had been cuckolded, although his wife repelled him, quarreled with him, and constantly pretended to be out of sorts or tired out, in order to escape from him. She seemed to take a malicious

pleasure in checkmating him by her personal remarks, her disenchanting answers, and her apparent listlessness.

They saw a great deal of company, and he called himself Du Pontel now, even entertaining thoughts of buying a title from the Pope. He only read certain newspapers, kept up a regular correspondence with the Orléans Princes, was thinking of starting a racing stable, and finished up by believing that he really was a fashionable man. He strutted about and was puffed out with conceit, having probably never read La Fontaine's fable of the ass that is laden with relics which people salute, and takes their bows to himself.

Suddenly, however, anonymous letters disturbed his quietude, and tore the bandage from his eyes.

At first he tore them up without reading them, and shrugged his shoulders disdainfully; but he received so many of them, and the writers seemed so determined to dot his *i's* and cross his *t's* and to clear his brain for him, that the unhappy man began to grow disturbed, and to watch and to ferret about. He instituted minute inquiries, and arrived at the conclusion that he no longer had the right to make fun of other husbands — that he was the perfect counterpart of *Sganarelle.**

Furious at having been duped, he set a whole private inquiry agency to work, continually acted a part, and one evening appeared unexpectedly with a commissary of police in the snug little bachelor's quarters which concealed his wife's escapades.

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*The *Cocu Imaginaire* (The Imaginary Cuckold), in Molière's play of that name.

Thérèse, pale with terror and terribly frightened, at her wits' end at being thus surprised in all the disorder of her lover's apartments, hid herself behind the bed curtains, while he, who was an officer of dragoons, very much vexed at being mixed up in such a pinchbeck scandal, and at being caught in a silk shirt by men who were so correctly dressed in frock coats, frowned angrily, and had to restrain himself from throwing his victim out of the window.

The police commissioner, who was calmly looking at this little scene with the coolness of experience, prepared to verify the fact that they were caught *in flagrante delictu*, and in an ironical voice said to the husband, who had claimed his services:

"I must ask for your name in full, Monsieur?"

"Charles Joseph Edward Dupontel," was the answer. And as the commissary was writing it down from his dictation, he added suddenly: "Du Pontel in two words, if you please, Monsieur le Commissionnaire!"

HAPPINESS

THE sky was blue, with light clouds that looked like swans slowly sailing on the waters of a lake, and the atmosphere was so warm, so saturated with the subtle odors of the mimosas, that Madame de Vielle-mont ordered coffee to be served on the terrace which overlooked the sea.

As the steam rose from the delicate china cups, one felt an almost inexpressible pleasure in watching the sails as they gradually disappeared in the mysterious distance. The almost motionless sea had the sheen of jewels and attracted the eyes like the looks of a dreamy woman.

Monsieur de Pardeillac, who had just arrived from Paris, fresh from the remembrance of the last election there from that carnival of variegated posters which for weeks had imparted the strange aspect of an Oriental bazaar to the whole city, had just been relating the victory of "The General," and went on to say that those who had thought that the game was lost were beginning to hope again.

After listening to him, old Count de Lancolme, who had spent his whole life in rummaging libraries, and who had certainly annotated more manuscripts than any Benedictine friar, shook his bald head and exclaimed in his shrill, rather mocking voice:

"Will you allow me to tell you a very old story, which came into my head, while you were speaking, my dear friend? I read it formerly in an old Italian city, though I forget at this moment where.

"It happened in the fifteenth century, which is far removed from our epoch, but you shall judge for yourselves whether it might not have happened yesterday.

"Since the day, when, mad with rage and rebellion, the town had made a bonfire of the Ducal palace, and had ignominiously expelled the patrician who had been their *podestat** as if he had been some vicious scoundrel, had thrust his lovely daughter into a convent, and had forced his sons, who might have claimed their parental heritage and have again imposed the abhorred yoke upon them, into a monastery, the town had never known any prosperous times. One after another, the shops closed, and money became as scarce as if some invasion of barbarian hordes had emptied the State Treasury and stolen the last gold coin.

"The poor people were in abject misery, and in vain held out their hands to passers-by under the church porches and in the squares. Only the watchmen disturbed the silence of the starlit nights, by the monotonous and melancholy call which announced the flight of the hours as they passed.

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*A Venetian or Genoese magistrate.

"There were no more serenades; no longer did viol and flute trouble the slumbers of the lover's choice; no longer were amorous arms thrown round women's supple waists, or bottles of red wine put to cool in the fountains under the trees. There were no more love adventures, to the rhythm of laughter and of kisses; nothing but heavy, monotonous weariness, and anxiety as to what the next day might bring forth, and ceaseless, unbridled ambitions and lusts.

"The palaces were deserted, one by one, as if the plague were raging, and the nobility had fled to Florence and to Rome. In the beginning, the common people, artisans and shopkeepers, had installed themselves in power, as in a conquered city, had seized posts of honor and well-paid offices, and had sacked the Treasury with their greedy and eager hands. After them came the middle classes, and these solemn upstarts and hypocrites, like leather bottles blown out with wind, acting like tyrants and lying without the least shame, disowned their former promises, and would soon have given the finishing stroke to the unfortunate city, which was already on its last legs.

"Discontent was increasing, and the *sbirri** could scarcely find time to tear the seditious placards, posted up by unknown hands, from the walls.

"But now that the old *podestat* had died in exile, worn out with grief, and his children, brought up under monastic rule, were accustomed to nothing but prayer, and thought only of their own salvation, there was nobody to take his place.

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*Italian police officers.

"And so these kinglets profited by the occasion to strut about at their ease like nobles, to stuff themselves with luxurious meals, to increase their property by degrees, to put everything up for sale, and to get rid of those who, later on, would have called for accountings, and have nailed them to the pillory by their ears.

"Their arrogance knew no bounds, and when they were questioned about their acts, they only replied by menaces or raillery. This state of affairs lasted for twenty years, when, as war was imminent with Lucca, the Council raised troops and enrolled mercenaries. Several battles were fought, in which the enemy was beaten and was obliged to flee, abandoning their colors, their arms, prisoners, and all the booty in their camp.

"The man who had led the soldiers to victory, whom they had acclaimed as a triumphant and laurel-crowned Cæsar around their camp-fires, was a poor *condottiere*,* who possessed nothing in the world except his clothes, his buff jerkin, and his heavy sword.

"They called him 'Hercules,' on account of his strong muscles, his imposing build, and his large head, and also 'Malavista,' because in battle he had no pity, no weakness, but seemed, with his great murderous arms, as if he had the long reach of death itself. He had neither title-deeds, fortune, nor relatives, for he had been born one night in the tent of a female camp follower. For a long time, an old broken drum had been his cradle, and he had grown up without knowing those maternal kisses and en-

* An Italian mercenary or free-lance, in the Middle Ages.

dearments that warm the heart, or the pleasure of sleeping on a soft bed, or of eating decent beef. He had known what it was to tighten his sword belt when luck had turned—like a weather-cock when the wind shifts, and sometimes would gladly have given all his share of the next booty for a mouldy crust of bread and a glass of water.

"He was a simple and a brave man, whose heart was as virgin as some shore on which no human foot has ever yet left its imprint.

"The Chiefs of the Council were imprudent enough to summon Hercules Malavista within the walls of the town, and to celebrate his arrival with almost imperial splendor—more, however, to deceive the people and to regain their waning popularity by means of a ceremony copied from pagan Rome, than to honor and recompense the services of a soldier whom they despised at the bottom of their hearts.

"The bells rang a full peal, and the archbishop and clergy and choir boys went to meet the Captain, singing psalms and hymns of joy, as if it were Easter. The streets and squares were strewn with branches of box, roses, and marjoram, while the meanest homes were decorated with flags and hung with drapery and rich stuffs.

"The conqueror came in through Trajan's gate, bare-headed, and with the symbolical golden laurel wreath on his head. Sitting on his horse, which was as black as a starless night, he appeared even taller, more vigorous and more masculine than he really was. He had a joyous and tranquil smile on his lips, and a hidden fire burning in his eyes. His soldiers bore the flags and the trophies that he had

gained, before him, and behind him there was a noise of clashing partisans and crossbows, and of loud voices shouting *vivats* in his honor.

"In this fashion, he traversed all the quarters of the town, and even the suburbs. The women thought him handsome and proud, blew kisses to him, and held up their children so that they might see him, and he might touch them. The men cheered him, and looked at him with emotion, and many of them reflected and dreamed about this bright, unknown man, who appeared to be surrounded by a halo of glory.

"The members of the Council began to perceive the extent of the almost irreparable fault they had committed. They did not know what to do in order to ward off the danger by which they were menaced, and to rid themselves of a guest who was quite ready to become their master. They saw clearly that their hours were numbered, that they were approaching the fatal period at which rioting becomes imminent, and leaders are carried away like pieces of straw in a swift current.

"Hercules could not show himself in public without being received with shouts of acclamation and noisy greetings, and deputations from the nobility, as well as from the people, came repeatedly and told him that he had only to make a sign and to say a word, for his name to be in every mouth, and for his authority to be accepted. They begged him on their knees to accept the supreme authority, as though he would be conferring a favor on them, but the free-lance did not seem to understand them, and repelled their offers with the superb indifference of a

soldier who has nothing to do with the people or a crown.

"At length, however, his resistance grew weaker; he felt the intoxication of power, and grew accustomed to the idea of holding the lives of thousands in his hands, of having a palace, arsenals full of arms, chests full of gold, ships which he could send on adventurous cruises wherever he pleased, of governing that city, with all its houses and all its churches, and of being a leading figure at all grand functions in the cathedral.

"The shopkeepers and merchants were overcome by terror at the idea, and bowed before the shadow of the sword, which might sweep them all away and upset their false weights and scales. So they assembled secretly in a monastery of the Carmelite friars outside the gates of the city, and a short time afterward the weaver Marconelli and the money-changer Rippone brought Giaconda, who was one of the most beautiful courtesans in Venice, who knew every secret in the Art of Love, and whose kisses were a foretaste of Paradise, back with them from that city. She soon managed to touch the soldier with her delicate, fair skin, to make him inhale its bewitching odor in close embrace, to dazzle him with her large, dark eyes, in which the reflection of stars seemed to shine, and when he had once tasted that feast of love, and drunk the heavy wine of kisses, when he had clasped that pink and white body in his arms, and had listened to a voice which sounded as soft as music and promised him eternities of joy and eternities of pleasures, Hercules lost his head, and forgot his dreams and his oaths.

"Why lose precious hours in conspiring, in deluding himself with chimeras; why risk his life when he loved and was loved—when the minutes were all too short to detach his lips from those of the woman he loved?

"And so he did whatever Giaconda demanded.

"They fled from the city, without even telling the sentinels who were on guard before his palace. They went far, far away, as they could not find any retreat that was sufficiently unknown and hidden. At last they stopped at a small, quiet fishing village, where there were gardens full of lemon-trees, where the deserted beach looked as if it were covered with gold, and where the sea was a deep blue until it was lost in the distance. And while the Captain and the courtesan loved each other and wore themselves out with pleasure—with the enchantment of the sea close to them—the irritated citizens whom he had left were clamoring for their idol, were indignant at his desertion, and tore up the paving stones in the streets to hurl at the man who had betrayed their confidence and worship.

"So they pulled his statue down from its pedestal, amid spiteful songs and jokes, and the members of the Council breathed again, no longer afraid of Malavista's great sword."

AN ADVENTURE IN PARIS

Is there any stronger feeling than curiosity in a woman? Fancy seeing, knowing, touching what one has dreamed about! What would a woman not do for that? Once a woman's eager curiosity is roused, she will be guilty of any folly, commit any imprudence, venture upon anything, and recoil from nothing. I am speaking of women who are really women, who are endowed with that triple-bottomed disposition, which appears to be reasonable and cool on the surface, but whose three secret compartments are filled as follows: The first, with female uneasiness, which is always in a state of fluttering; the next, with sly tricks which are colored, in imitation of good faith, with the sophistical and formidable wiles of apparently devout women; and the last, with all those charming, improper acts, with that delightful deceit, exquisite perfidy, and all those wayward qualities which drive lovers who are stupidly credulous to suicide, but delight others.

The woman whose adventure I am about to relate was a little person from the provinces, who had been insipidly chaste till then. Her life, which was apparently so calm, was spent at home, with a busy husband and two children, whom she brought up like an irreproachable woman. But her heart beat with unsatisfied curiosity and unknown longing. She was continually thinking of Paris, and read the fashionable papers eagerly. The accounts of parties, of the dresses and various entertainments, excited her longing; but, above all, she was strangely agitated by those paragraphs which were full of double meaning, by those veils which were half raised by clever phrases, and which gave her a glimpse of culpable and ravishing delights, and from her country home, she saw Paris in an apotheosis of magnificent and corrupt luxury.

During the long nights, when she dreamed, lulled by the regular snores of a husband, sleeping on his back by her side, with a silk handkerchief tied round his head, she saw in her sleep those well-known men whose names appeared regularly on the first page of the newspapers like stars in the dark sky. She pictured to herself their lives — continual excitement, constant debauches, orgies such as they practised in ancient Rome, which were horribly voluptuous, with refinements of sensuality so complicated, that she could not even imagine them.

The boulevards seemed to her to be a kind of abyss of human passions, and there could be no doubt that the houses there concealed mysteries of prodigious love. But she felt that she was growing old, and this without having known life, except in those

regular, horribly monotonous, everyday occupations which constitute the happiness of the home. She was still pretty, for she was well preserved by a tranquil existence, like winter fruit in a closed cupboard; but she was agitated and devoured by her secret ardor. She used to ask herself whether she should die without having experienced any of those damning, intoxicating joys, without having plunged once, just once, into that flood of Parisian voluptuousness.

By dint of much perseverance, she paved the way for a journey to Paris, found a pretext, got some relatives to invite her, and as her husband could not go with her, she went alone. As soon as she arrived, she invented a reason for remaining for some days, or rather for some nights, if necessary, as she told him that she had met some friends who lived a little way out of town.

And then she set out on a voyage of discovery. She went up and down the boulevards, without seeing anything except roving and licensed vice. She looked into the large *cafés*, and read the Agony Column of the "Figaro," which every morning seemed to her like a tocsin, a summons to love. But nothing put her on the track of those orgies of actors and actresses; nothing revealed to her those temples of debauchery which opened, she imagined, at some magic word, like the cave in the "Arabian Nights," or the catacombs in Rome, where the mysteries of a persecuted religion were secretly celebrated.

Her relatives, who were quite middle-class people, could not introduce her to any of those well-known men, of whose names her head was full; and in

despair she was thinking of returning, when chance came to her aid. One day, as she was going along the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, she stopped to look into a shop full of those colored Japanese knickknacks, which attract the eye by their color. She was looking at the little ivory buffoons, the tall vases of flaming enamel, and the curious bronzes, when she heard the shopkeeper dilating, with many bows, on the value of an enormous, pot-bellied comical figure — which was quite unique, he said — to a little, bald-headed, gray-bearded man.

Every moment the shopkeeper repeated his customer's name, which was a celebrated one, in a voice like a trumpet. The other customers, young women and well-dressed gentlemen, gave a swift and furtive but respectful glance at the celebrated writer, who was looking admiringly at the china figure. They were both equally ugly, as ugly as two brothers who had sprung from the same mother.

"I will let you have it for a thousand francs, Monsieur Varin, and that is exactly what it cost me. I should ask anybody else fifteen hundred, but I think a great deal of literary and artistic customers, and have special prices for them. They all come to me, Monsieur Varin. Yesterday, Monsieur Busnach bought a large, antique goblet of me, and the other day I sold two candelabra like this (is it not handsome?) to Monsieur Alexander Dumas. If Monsieur Zola were to see that Japanese figure, he would buy it immediately, Monsieur Varin."

The author hesitated in perplexity, as he wanted to have the figure, but the price was above him, and he thought no more about being stared at than if he

had been alone in the desert. She came in trembling, with her eyes fixed shamelessly upon him, and she did not even ask herself whether he were good-looking, elegant, or young. It was Jean Varin himself, Jean Varin. After a long struggle and painful hesitation, he put the figure down on to the table. "No, it is too dear," he said.

The shopkeeper's eloquence redoubled. "Oh! Monsieur Varin, too dear? It is worth two thousand francs, if it is worth a sou."

But the man of letters replied sadly, still looking at the figure with the enameled eyes: "I do not say it is not: but it is too dear for me."

And thereupon, she, seized by a kind of mad audacity, came forward and said: "What will you charge me for the figure?"

The shopkeeper, in surprise, replied: "Fifteen hundred francs, Madame."

"I will take it."

The writer, who had not even noticed her till that moment, turned round suddenly. He looked at her from head to foot, with half-closed eyes, observantly, and then he took in the details, as a connoisseur. She was charming, suddenly animated by the flame which had hitherto been dormant in her. And then, a woman who gives fifteen hundred francs for a knickknack is not to be met with every day.

But she was overcome by a feeling of delightful delicacy, and turning to him, she said in a trembling voice:

"Excuse me, Monsieur; no doubt I have been rather hasty, as perhaps you had not finally made up your mind."

He, however, only bowed, and said: "Indeed I had, Madame."

And she, filled with emotion, continued: "Well, Monsieur, if either to-day, or at any other time, you change your mind, you can have this Japanese figure. I only bought it because you seemed to like it."

He was visibly flattered, and smiled. "I should much like to find out how you know who I am?" he said.

Then she told him how she admired him, and became quite eloquent as she quoted his works, and while they were talking, he rested his arms on a table and fixed his bright eyes upon her, trying to make out who and what she really was. But the shopkeeper, who was pleased to have that living puff of his goods, called out, from the other end of the shop: "Just look at this, Monsieur Varin; is it not beautiful?"

And then everyone looked round, and she almost trembled with pleasure at being seen talking so intimately with such a well-known man.

At last, however, intoxicated, as it were, by her feelings, she grew bold, like a general who is about to order an assault.

"Monsieur," she said, "will you do me a great, a very great pleasure? Allow me to offer you this funny Japanese figure, as a keepsake from a woman who admires you passionately, and whom you have seen for ten minutes."

Of course he refused. She persisted, but still he resisted her offer, at which he was much amused, and at which he laughed heartily. But that only made her more obstinate, and she said: "Very well,

then, I shall take it to your house immediately; where do you live?"

He refused to give her his address, but she got it from the shopkeeper, and when she had paid for her purchase, she ran out to take a cab. The writer went after her, as he did not wish to accept a present for which he could not possibly account. He reached her just as she was jumping into a vehicle, and getting in after her, he almost fell on to her, and then tumbled on to the bottom of the cab as it started. He picked himself up, however, and sat down by her side, feeling very much annoyed.

It was no good for him to argue and to beg her; she showed herself intractable, and when they got to the door, she stated her conditions: "I will undertake not to leave this with you," she said, "if you will promise to do all I want to-day." And the whole affair seemed so funny to him that he agreed.

"What do you generally do at this time?" she asked him; and after hesitating for a few moments, he replied: "I generally go for a walk."

"Very well, then, we will go to the Bois de Boulogne!" she said, in a resolute voice, and they started.

He was obliged to tell her the names of all the well-known women, pure or impure, with every detail about them—their mode of life, their habits, their private affairs, and their vices; and when it was getting dusk, she said to him: "What do you do every day at this time?"

"I have some absinthe," he replied, with a laugh.

"Very well, then, Monsieur," she went on seriously; "let us go and have some absinthe."

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AFTER THE ORIGINAL DRAWING BY L. VALLET.

"What do you do at this time every night?"

They went into a large *café* on the boulevard which he frequented, and where he met some of his colleagues, whom he introduced to her. She was half beside herself with pleasure, and kept saying to herself: "At last! At last!"

But time went on, and she observed that she supposed that it must be about his dinner time, and she suggested that they should go and dine. When they left Bignon's, after dinner, she wanted to know what he did in the evening, and looking at her fixedly, he replied: "That depends; sometimes I go to the theater."

"Very well, then, Monsieur; let us go to the theater."

They went to the Vaudeville with an order, thanks to him, and, to her great pride, the whole house saw her sitting by his side in the balcony stalls.

When the play was over, he gallantly kissed her hand, and said: "It only remains for me to thank you for this delightful day."

But she interrupted him: "What do you do at this time, every night?"

"Why—why—I go home."

She began to laugh, a little tremulous laugh: "Very well, Monsieur, let us go to your rooms."

They did not say anything more. She shivered occasionally, from head to foot, feeling inclined to stay, and inclined to run away, but with a fixed determination, after all, to see it out to the end. She was so excited that she had to hold on to the baluster as she went upstairs, and he came up behind her, with a wax match in his hand.

As soon as they were in the room, she undressed

herself quickly, and retired without saying a word, and then she waited for him, cowering against the wall. But she was as simple as it was possible for a provincial lawyer's wife to be, and he was more exacting than a pasha with three tails, and so they did not at all understand each other.

At last, however, he went to sleep. The night passed, and the silence was only disturbed by the ticktack of the clock, while she, lying motionless, thought of her conjugal nights, and by the light of the Chinese lantern, she looked nearly heartbroken at the little fat man lying on his back, whose round stomach raised up the bedclothes, like a balloon filled with gas. He snored with the noise of a wheezy organ pipe, with prolonged snorts and comic chokings. His few hairs profited by his sleep to stand up in a very strange way, as if they were tired of having been fastened for so long to that pate, whose bareness they were trying to cover.

At last daylight appeared through the drawn blinds. She got up and dressed herself without making any noise, and had already half opened the door, when she made the lock creak, and he woke up and rubbed his eyes. He was some moments before he quite came to himself, and then, when he remembered all that had happened, he said:

"What! Are you going already?"

She remained standing, in some confusion, and then said, in a hesitating voice:

"Yes, of course; it is morning."

Then he sat up, and said: "Look here, I have something to ask you, in my turn." And as she did not reply, he went on: "You have surprised me

most confoundedly since yesterday. Be open, and tell me why you did it all, for upon my word I cannot understand it in the least."

She went close up to him, blushing like as if she had been a virgin, and said: "I wanted to know — what — what vice — really was, and — well — well, it is not at all funny."

And she ran out of the room, and downstairs into the street.

A number of sweepers were busy in the streets, brushing the pavements, the roadway, and sweeping everything on one side. With the same regular motion, the motion of mowers in a meadow, they pushed the mud in front of them in a semicircle. She met them in every street, like dancing puppets, walking automatically with a swaying motion, and it seemed to her as if something had been swept out of her; as if her over-excited dreams had been pushed into the gutter, or into the drain. So she went home, out of breath and very cold, and all that she could remember was the sensation of the motion of those brooms sweeping the streets of Paris in the early morning.

When she got into her room, she threw herself on to her bed, and cried.

CHRISTMAS EVE

"THE Christmas-eve supper!* Oh! no, I shall never go in for that again!" Stout Henri Templier said that in a furious voice, as if some one had proposed some crime to him, while the others laughed and said:

"What are you flying into a rage about?"

"Because a Christmas-eve supper played me the dirtiest trick in the world, and ever since I have felt an insurmountable horror for that night of imbecile gaiety."

"Tell us about it."

"You want to know what it was? Very well then, just listen.

"You remember how cold it was two years ago at Christmas; cold enough to kill poor people in the streets. The Seine was covered with ice; the pavements froze one's feet through the soles of one's boots, and the whole world seemed to be at the point of congealing.

*A great institution in France, and especially in Paris, at which black puddings are an indispensable dish.

"I had a big piece of work on, and refused every invitation to supper, as I preferred to spend the night at my writing table. I dined alone and then began to work. But about ten o'clock I grew restless at the thought of the gay and busy life all over Paris, at the noise in the streets which reached me in spite of everything, at my neighbors' preparations for supper, which I heard through the walls. I hardly knew any longer what I was doing; I wrote nonsense, and at last I came to the conclusion that I had better give up all hope of producing any good work that night.

"I walked up and down my room; I sat down and got up again. I was certainly under the mysterious influence of the enjoyment outside, and I resigned myself to it. So I rang for my servant, and said to her:

"'Angela, go and get a good supper for two; some oysters, a cold partridge, some crayfish, ham, and some cakes. Put out two bottles of champagne, lay the cloth and go to bed.'

"She obeyed in some surprise, and when all was ready, I put on my great-coat and went out. The great question remained: 'Whom was I going to bring in to supper?' My female friends had all been invited elsewhere, and if I had wished to have one, I ought to have seen about it beforehand. So I thought that I would do a good action at the same time, and said to myself:

"'Paris is full of poor and pretty girls who will have nothing on their table to-night, and who are on the lookout for some generous fellow. I will act the part of Providence to one of them this evening; and I will find one if I have to go into every pleasure

resort, and will hunt till I find one to my choice.' So I started off on my search.

"I certainly found many poor girls who were on the lookout for some adventure, but they were ugly enough to give any man a fit of indigestion, or thin enough to freeze in their tracks if they stopped, and you all know that I have a weakness for stout women. The more flesh they have, the better I like them, and a female colossus would be my ideal.

"Suddenly, opposite the 'Théâtre des Variétés,' I saw a figure to my liking. I trembled with pleasure, and said:

"'By Jove! What a fine girl!'

"It only remained for me to see her face, for a woman's face is the dessert.

"I hastened on, overtook her, and turned round suddenly under a gas lamp. She was charming, quite young, dark, with large, black eyes, and I immediately made my proposition, which she accepted without any hesitation, and a quarter of an hour later we were sitting at supper in my lodgings. 'Oh! how comfortable it is here,' she said as she came in, and she looked about her with evident satisfaction at having found a supper and a bed on that bitter night. She was superb; so beautiful that she astonished me, and so stout that she fairly captivated me.

"She took off her cloak and hat, sat down and began to eat; but she seemed in low spirits, and sometimes her pale face twitched as if she were suffering from some hidden sorrow.

"'Have you anything troubling you?' I asked her.

"'Bah! Don't let us think of troubles!'

"And she began to drink. She emptied her

champagne glass at a draught, filled it again, and emptied it again, without stopping, and soon a little color came into her cheeks, and she began to laugh.

"I adored her already, kissed her continually, and discovered that she was neither stupid, nor common, nor coarse as ordinary street-walkers are. I asked her for some details about her life, but she replied:

"'My little fellow, that is no business of yours!' Alas! an hour later!

"At last it was time to retire, and while I was clearing the table, which had been laid in front of the fire, she undressed herself quickly, and got in. My neighbors were making a terrible din, singing and laughing like lunatics, and so I said to myself:

"'I was quite right to go out and bring in this girl; I should never have been able to do any work.'

"At that moment, however, a deep groan made me look round, and I said:

"'What is the matter with you, my dear?'

"She did not reply, but continued to utter painful sighs, as if she were suffering horribly, and I continued:

"'Do you feel ill?' And suddenly she uttered a cry, a heartrending cry, and I rushed up to the bed, with a candle in my hand.

"Her face was distorted with pain, and she was wringing her hands, panting and uttering long, deep groans, which sounded like a rattle in the throat, and were painful to hear. I asked her in consternation:

"'What is the matter with you? Do tell me what is the matter.'

"'Oh! the pain! the pain!' she said. I pulled up the bedclothes, and I saw, my friends, that she was in labor.

"Then I lost my head, and ran and knocked at the wall with my fists, shouting: 'Help! help!'

"My door was opened almost immediately, and a crowd of people came in, men in evening clothes, women in full dress, harlequins, Turks, musketeers, and the inroad startled me so, that I could not explain myself, while they, who had thought that some accident had happened, or that a crime had been committed, could not understand what was the matter. At last, however, I managed to say:

"'This — this — woman — is being confined.'

"Then they looked at her, and gave their opinion. A friar, especially, declared that he knew all about it, and wished to assist nature, but as they were all as drunk as pigs, I was afraid that they would kill her. So I rushed downstairs without my hat, to fetch an old doctor, who lived in the next street. When I came back with him, the whole house was up; the gas on the stairs had been relighted, the lodgers from every floor were in my room, while four boatmen were finishing my champagne and crayfish.

"As soon as they saw me they raised a loud shout. A milkmaid presented me with a horrible little wrinkled specimen of humanity, that was mewing like a cat, and said to me:

"'It is a girl.'

"The doctor examined the woman, declared that she was in a dangerous state, as the event had occurred immediately after supper, and took his leave, saying he would immediately send a sick nurse and a wet nurse. An hour later, the two women came, bringing all that was requisite with them.

"I spent the night in my armchair, too distracted to be able to think of the consequences, and almost as soon as it was light the doctor came again. He found his patient very ill, and said to me:

"'Your wife, Monsieur—'

"'She is not my wife,' I interrupted him.

"'Very well then, your mistress; it does not matter to me.'

"He told me what must be done for her, what her diet must be, and then wrote a prescription.

"What was I to do? Could I send the poor creature to the hospital? I should have been looked upon as a brute in the house and in all the neighborhood. So I kept her in my rooms, and she had my bed for six weeks.

"I sent the child to some peasants at Poissy to be taken care of, and she still costs me fifty francs* a month, for as I had paid at first, I shall be obliged to go on paying as long as I live. Later on, she will believe that I am her father. But to crown my misfortunes, when the girl had recovered, I found that she was in love with me, madly in love with me, the baggage!"

"Well?"

"Well, she had grown as thin as a homeless cat, and I turned the skeleton out of doors. But she watches for me in the streets, hides herself, so that she may see me pass, stops me in the evening when I go out, in order to kiss my hand, and, in fact, worries me enough to drive me mad. That is why I never keep Christmas eve now."

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*$10.

THE AWAKENING

DURING the three years that she had been married, she had not left the Val de Ciré, where her husband possessed two cotton-mills. She led a quiet life, and, although without children, she was quite happy in her house among the trees, which the work-people called the "château."

Although Monsieur Vasseur was considerably older than she was, he was very kind. She loved him, and no guilty thought had ever entered her mind.

Her mother came and spent every summer at Ciré, and then returned to Paris for the winter, as soon as the leaves began to fall.

Jeanne coughed a little every autumn, for the narrow valley through which the river wound was very foggy for five months in the year. First of all, slight mists hung over the meadows, making all the low-lying ground look like a large pond, out of which the roofs of the houses rose. Then a white vapor, which rose like a tide, enveloped everything, turning the valley into a phantom land, through

which men moved like ghosts, without recognizing each other ten yards off, and the trees, wreathed in mist and dripping with moisture, rose up through it.

But the people who went along the neighboring hills, and looked down upon the deep, white depression of the valley, saw the two huge chimneys of Monsieur Vasseur's factories rising above the mist below. Day and night they vomited forth two long trails of black smoke, the sole indication that people were living in the hollow, which looked as if it were filled with a cloud of cotton.

That year, when October came, the medical men advised the young woman to go and spend the winter in Paris with her mother, as the air of the valley was dangerous for her weak chest, and she went. For a month or so, she thought continually of the house which she had left, the home to which she seemed rooted, the well-known furniture and quiet ways of which she loved so much. But by degrees she grew accustomed to her new life, and got to like entertainments, dinner and evening parties, and balls.

Till then she had retained her girlish manners, had been undecided and rather sluggish, walked languidly, and had a tired smile, but now she became animated and merry, and was always ready for pleasure. Men paid her marked attentions, and she was amused at their talk and made fun of their gallantries, as she felt sure that she could resist them, for she was rather disgusted with love from what she had learned of it in marriage.

The idea of giving up her body to the coarse caresses of such bearded creatures made her laugh with pity and shudder a little with ignorance.

She asked herself how women could consent to degrading contacts with strangers, the more so as they were already obliged to endure them with their legitimate husbands. She would have loved her husband much more if they had lived together like two friends, and had restricted themselves to chaste kisses, which are the caresses of the soul.

But she was much amused by their compliments, by the desire which showed itself in their eyes, a desire she did not share, by declarations of love whispered into her ear as they were returning to the drawing-room after some grand dinner, by words murmured so low that she almost had to guess them, words which left her blood quite cool, and her heart untouched, while gratifying her unconscious coquetry, kindling a flame of pleasure within her, making her lips open, her eyes grow bright, and her woman's heart, to which homage was due, quiver with delight.

She was fond of those *tête-à-têtes* in the dusk, when a man grows pressing, hesitates, trembles and falls on his knees. It was a delicious and new pleasure to her to know that they felt a passion which left her quite unmoved, able to say *no* by a shake of the head and by pursing her lips, able to withdraw her hands, to get up and calmly ring for lights, and to see the man who had been trembling at her feet get up, confused and furious when he heard the footman coming.

She often uttered a hard laugh, which froze the most burning words, and said harsh things, which fell like a jet of icy water on the most ardent protestations, while the intonations of her voice were

enough to make any man who really loved her kill himself. There were two especially who made obstinate love to her, although they did not at all resemble one another.

One of them, Paul Péronel, was a tall man of the world, gallant and enterprising, a man who was accustomed to successful love affairs, one who knew how to wait, and when to seize his opportunity.

The other, Monsieur d'Avancelle, quivered when he came near her, scarcely ventured to express his love, but followed her like a shadow, and gave utterance to his hopeless desire by distracted looks, and the assiduity of his attentions to her. She made him a kind of servant and treated him as if he had been her slave.

She would have been much amused if anybody had told her that she would love him, and yet she did love him, after a singular fashion. As she saw him continually, she had grown accustomed to his voice, to his gestures, and to his manner, just as one grows accustomed to those with whom one meets continually. Often his face haunted her in her dreams, and she saw him as he really was; gentle, delicate in all his actions, humble, but passionately in love. She would awake full of these dreams, fancying that she still heard him and felt him near her, until one night (most likely she was feverish) she saw herself alone with him in a small wood, where they were both sitting on the grass. He was saying charming things to her, while he pressed and kissed her hands. She could feel the warmth of his skin and of his breath and she was stroking his hair in a very natural manner.

We are quite different in our dreams to what we are in real life. She felt full of love for him, full of calm and deep love, and was happy in stroking his forehead and in holding him against her. Gradually he put his arms around her, kissed her eyes and her cheeks without her attempting to get away from him; their lips met, and she yielded.

When she saw him again, unconscious of the agitation that he had caused her, she felt that she grew red, and while he was telling her of his love, she was continually recalling to mind their previous meeting, without being able to get rid of the recollection.

She loved him, loved him with refined tenderness, chiefly from the remembrance of her dream, although she dreaded the accomplishment of the desires which had arisen in her mind.

At last he perceived it, and then she told him everything, even to the dread of his kisses, and she made him swear that he would respect her, and he did so. They spent long hours of transcendental love together, during which their souls alone embraced, and when they separated, they were enervated, weak, and feverish.

Sometimes their lips met, and with closed eyes they reveled in that long, yet chaste caress. She felt, however, that he could not resist much longer, and as she did not wish to yield, she wrote and told her husband that she wanted to come to him, and to return to her tranquil, solitary life. But in reply, he wrote her a very kind letter, and strongly advised her not to return in the middle of the winter, and so expose herself to the sudden change of climate,

and to the icy mists of the valley, and she was thunderstruck and angry with that confiding man, who did not guess, who did not understand, the struggles of her heart.

February was a warm, bright month, and although she now avoided being alone with Monsieur Avancelle, she sometimes accepted his invitation to drive round the lake in the Bois de Boulogne with him, when it was dusk.

On one of those evenings, it was so warm that it seemed as if the sap in every tree and plant were rising. Their cab was going at a walk; it was growing dusk, and they were sitting close together, holding each other's hands, and she said to herself:

"It is all over, I am lost!" for she felt her desires rising in her again, the imperious demand for that supreme embrace which she had undergone in her dream. Every moment their lips sought each other, clung together, and separated, only to meet again immediately.

He did not venture to go into the house with her, but left her at her door, more in love with him than ever, and half fainting.

Monsieur Paul Péronel was waiting for her in the little drawing-room, without a light, and when he shook hands with her, he felt how feverish she was. He began to talk in a low, tender voice, lulling her tired mind with the charm of amorous words.

She listened to him without replying, for she was thinking of the other; she thought she was listening to the other, and thought she felt him leaning against her, in a kind of hallucination. She saw only him, and did not remember that any other man existed on

earth, and when her ears trembled at those three syllables: "I love you," it was he, the other man, who uttered them, who kissed her hands, who strained her to his breast, like the other had done shortly before in the cab. It was he who pressed victorious kisses on her lips, it was he whom she held in her arms and embraced, to whom she was calling, with all the longings of her heart, with all the overwrought ardor of her body.

When she awoke from her dream, she uttered a terrible cry. Paul Péronel was kneeling by her and was thanking her passionately, while he covered her disheveled hair with kisses, and she almost screamed out: "Go away! go away! go away!"

And as he did not understand what she meant, and tried to put his arm round her waist again, she writhed, as she stammered out:

"You are a wretch, and I hate you! Go away! go away!" And he got up in great surprise, took up his hat, and went.

The next day she returned to Val de Ciré, and her husband, who had not expected her for some time, blamed her for her freak.

"I could not live away from you any longer," she said.

He found her altered in character and sadder than formerly, but when he said to her: "What is the matter with you? You seem unhappy. What do you want?" she replied:

"Nothing. Happiness exists only in our dreams in this world."

Avancelle came to see her the next summer, and she received him without any emotion and without

regret, for she suddenly perceived that she had never loved him, except in a dream, from which Paul Péronel had brutally roused her.

But the young man, who still adored her, thought as he returned to Paris:

"Women are really very strange, complicated, and inexplicable beings."

THE WHITE LADY

FORTUNA, goddess of chance and good luck, has always been Cupid's best ally, and Arnold T., who was a lieutenant in a hussar regiment, was evidently a special favorite of both deities.

This good-looking, well-bred young officer had been an enthusiastic admirer of the two Countesses W., mother and daughter, during a tolerably long leave of absence, which he spent with his relations in Vienna. He had admired them in the Prater, had worshiped them at the opera, but he had never had an opportunity of making their acquaintance, and when he was back at his dull quarters in Galicia, he liked to think about those two aristocratic beauties. Last summer his regiment was transferred to Bohemia, to a wildly romantic district, which has been made illustrious by a talented writer. It abounds in magnificent woods, lofty mountain-forests, and castles, and is a favorite summer resort of the neighboring aristocracy.

Who can describe his joyful surprise when he and

his men were quartered in an old, weatherbeaten castle in the middle of a wood, and he learned from the house-steward who received him that the owner of the castle was the husband, and, consequently, also the father of his Viennese ideals. An hour after he had taken possession of his old-fashioned but beautifully furnished room in a side-wing of the castle, he put on his full-dress uniform, and throwing his dolman over his shoulders went to pay his respects to the Count and the ladies.

He was received with the greatest cordiality. The Count was delighted to have a companion when he went out shooting, and the ladies were no less pleased at having some one to accompany them on their walks in the forests, or on their rides, so that he felt only half on the earth and half in the seventh heaven of Mohammedan bliss. Before supper he found time to inspect the house more closely, and even to take a sketch of the large, gloomy building from a favorable point. The ancient seat of the Counts of W. was really very gloomy; in fact it gave one a sinister, uncomfortable feeling. The walls, which were crumbling away here and there, were covered with dark ivy; the round towers harbored jackdaws, owls, and hawks; an Æolian harp complained and sighed and wept in the wind; the stones in the castle yard were overgrown with grass; the cloisters re-echoed to every footstep; great ancestral portraits hung on the walls, coated as it were with dark, mysterious veils by the centuries which had passed over them. All this recalled to him the legends and fairy tales of his youth, and he involuntarily thought of the "Sleeping Beauty in the Wood" and of "Blue Beard," of the cruel

mistress of the Kynast,* and of that aristocratic tigress of the Carpathians, who obtained the unfading charm of eternal youth by bathing in human blood.

He came in to supper, where he found himself for the first time in the company of all the members of the family, just in the frame of mind that was suitable for ghost stories, and was not a little surprised when his host told him, half smiling and half seriously, that the "White Lady" was disturbing the castle again, and that she had latterly been seen very often.

"Yes, indeed," Countess Ida exclaimed, "you must take care, Baron, for she haunts the very wing where your room is."

The hussar was just in the frame of mind to take the matter seriously, but, on the other hand, when he saw the dark, ardent eyes of the Countess, and then the merry blue eyes of her daughter, fixed on him, any real fear of ghosts was quite out of the question with him. For Baron T. feared nothing in this world, but he possessed a very lively imagination, which could conjure up threatening forms from another world so plainly that sometimes he felt very uncomfortable at his own fancies. But on the present occasion the malicious apparition had no power over him; the ladies took care of that, for both of them were beautiful and amiable.

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*A castle, now a well-preserved ruin, in the Giant Mountains in N. Germany. The legend is that its mistress, Kunigerude, vowed to marry nobody except the Knight who should ride round the parapet of the castle, and many perished in the attempt. At last one of them succeeded in performing the feat, but he merely sternly rebuked her, and took his leave. He was accompanied by his wife, disguised as his page, according to some versions of the legend.

The Countess was a mature Venus of thirty-six, of middle height, with bright eyes, thick dark hair, beautiful white teeth, and with the voluptuous figure of a true Viennese, while her daughter, Ida, who was seventeen, had light hair, the pert little nose of the china figures of shepherdesses in the dress of the period of Louis XIV., and was short, slim, and full of French grace. Besides them and the Count, a son of twelve and his tutor were present at supper. It struck the hussar as strange that the tutor, who was a strongly-built young man, with a winning face and those refined manners which the greatest plebeian quickly acquires when brought into close and constant contact with the aristocracy, was treated with great consideration by all the family except the Countess, who treated him very haughtily. She assumed a particularly imperious manner toward her son's tutor, and she either found fault with, or made fun of, everything that he did, while he put up with it all with smiling humility.

Before supper was over their conversation again turned on to the ghost, and Baron T. asked whether they did not possess a picture of the White Lady.

"Of course we have one," they all replied at once; whereupon Baron T. begged to be allowed to see it.

"I will show it to you to-morrow," the Count said.

"No, papa, now, immediately," the younger lady said mockingly; "just before the ghostly hour, such a thing creates a much greater impression."

All who were present, not excepting the boy and his tutor, took a candle. Then they walked, as if in a torchlight procession, to the wing of the house

where the hussar's room was. There was a life-size picture of the White Lady hanging in a Gothic passage near his room, among other ancestral portraits, and it by no means made a terrible impression on anyone who looked at it, but rather the contrary. The ghost, dressed in stiff, gold brocade and purple velvet, and with a hawk on her wrist, looked like one of those seductive Amazons of the fifteenth century who knew the art of laying men and game at their feet with equal skill.

"Don't you think that the White Lady is very like mamma?" Countess Ida said, interrupting the Baron's silent contemplation of the picture.

"There is no doubt of it," the hussar replied, while the Countess smiled and the tutor turned red. They were still standing before the picture, when a strong gust of wind suddenly extinguished all the lights, and they all uttered a simultaneous cry.

"The White Lady," the little Count whispered, but she did not come, and as it was luckily a moonlight night, they soon recovered from their momentary shock. The family retired to their apartments, while the hussar and the tutor went to their own rooms, which were situated in the wing of the castle which was haunted by the White Lady; the officer's apartment being scarcely thirty yards from the portrait, while the tutor's was rather further down the corridor.

The hussar went to bed, and was soon fast asleep, and though he had rather uneasy dreams nothing further happened. But while they were at breakfast the next morning, the Count's body-servant told them, with every appearance of real terror, that as he was

crossing the courtyard at midnight, he had suddenly heard a noise like bats in the open cloisters, and when he looked he distinctly saw the White Lady gliding slowly through them. But they merely laughed at the poltroon, and though our hussar laughed also, he fully made up his mind, without saying a word about it, to keep a lookout for the ghost that night.

Again they had supper alone, without any company, had some music and pleasant talk and separated at half past eleven. The hussar, however, only went to his room for form's sake; he loaded his pistols, and when all was quiet in the castle, he crept down into the courtyard and took up his position behind a pillar which was quite hidden in the shade, while the moon, which was nearly at the full, flooded the cloisters with its clear, pale light.

There were no lights to be seen in the castle except from two windows, which were those of the Countess's apartments, and soon they were also extinguished. The clock struck twelve, and the hussar could scarcely breathe from excitement; the next moment, however, he heard the noise which the Count's body-servant had compared to that of bats, and almost at the same instant a white figure glided slowly through the open cloisters and passed so close to him, that it almost made his blood curdle. Then it disappeared in the wing of the castle which he and the tutor occupied.

The officer, who was usually so brave, stood as though he was paralyzed for a few moments. But then he took heart, and feeling determined to make the nearer acquaintance of the spectral beauty, he crept softly up the broad staircase and took up his

position in a deep recess in the cloisters, where nobody could see him.

He waited for a long time; he heard every quarter strike, and at last, just before the close of the "witching hour," he heard the same noise like the rustling of bats, and then she came. He felt the flutter of her white dress, and she stood before him — it was indeed the Countess.

He presented his pistol at her as he challenged her, but she raised her hand menacingly.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed. "If you are really a ghost, prove it, for I am going to fire."

"For heaven's sake!" the White Lady whispered, and at the same instant two white arms were thrown round him, and he felt a full, warm bosom heaving against his own.

After that night the ghost appeared more frequently still. Not only did the White Lady make her appearance every night in the cloisters, only to disappear in the proximity of the hussar's rooms as long as the family remained at the castle, but she even followed them to Vienna.

Baron T., who went to that capital on leave of absence during the following winter, and who was the Count's guest at the express wish of his wife, was frequently told by the footman that although hitherto she had seemed to be confined to the old castle in Bohemia, she had shown herself now here, now there, in the mansion in Vienna, in a white dress making a noise like the wings of a bat, and bearing a striking resemblance to the beautiful Countess.

MADAME BAPTISTE

WHEN I went into the waiting-room at the station at Loubain, the first thing I did was to look at the clock, and I found that I had two hours and ten minutes to wait for the Paris express.

I felt suddenly tired, as if I had walked twenty miles. Then I looked about me, as if I could find some means of killing the time on the station walls. At last I went out again, and halted outside the gates of the station, racking my brains to find something to do. The street, which was a kind of boulevard planted with acacias, between two rows of houses of unequal shape and different styles of architecture, houses such as one only sees in a small town, ascended a slight hill, and at the extreme end of it there were some trees, as if it ended in a park.

From time to time a cat crossed the street, and jumped over the gutters, carefully. A cur sniffed at every tree, and hunted for fragments from the kitchens, but I did not see a single human being. I felt listless

and disheartened. What could I do with myself? I was already thinking of the inevitable and interminable visit to the small *café* at the railway station, where I should have to sit over a glass of undrinkable beer, and an illegible newspaper, when I saw a funeral procession coming out of a side street into the one in which I was, and the sight of the hearse was a relief to me. It would, at any rate, give me something to do for ten minutes.

Suddenly, however, my curiosity was aroused. The corpse was followed by eight gentlemen, one of whom was weeping, while the others were chatting together. But there was no priest, and I thought to myself: "This is a non-religious funeral," but then I reflected that a town like Loubain must contain at least a hundred freethinkers, who would have made a point of making a manifestation. What could it be then? The rapid pace of the procession clearly proved that the body was to be buried without ceremony, and, consequently, without the intervention of religion.

My idle curiosity framed the most complicated suppositions, and as the hearse passed a strange idea struck me, which was to follow it with the eight gentlemen. That would take up my time for an hour, at least, and I, accordingly, walked with the others, with a sad look on my face, and on seeing this, the two last turned round in surprise, and then spoke to each other in a low voice.

No doubt, they were asking each other whether I belonged to the town, and then they consulted the two in front of them, who stared at me in turn. The close attention they paid me annoyed me, and

to put an end to it, I went up to them, and after bowing, said:

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for interrupting your conversation, but seeing a civil funeral, I have followed it, although I did not know the deceased gentleman whom you are accompanying."

"It is a woman," one of them said.

I was much surprised at hearing this, and asked: "But it is a civil funeral, is it not?"

The other gentleman, who evidently wished to tell me all about it, then said: "Yes and no. The clergy have refused to allow us the use of the church."

On hearing that, I uttered a prolonged *A—h!* of astonishment. I could not understand it at all, but my obliging neighbor continued:

"It is rather a long story. This young woman committed suicide, and that is the reason why she cannot be buried with any religious ceremony. The gentleman who is walking first, and who is crying, is her husband."

I replied, with some hesitation:

"You surprise and interest me very much, Monsieur. Shall I be indiscreet if I ask you to tell me the facts of the case? If I am troubling you, think that I have said nothing about the matter."

The gentleman took my arm familiarly.

"Not at all, not at all. Let us stop a little behind the others, and I will tell it you, although it is a very sad story. We have plenty of time before getting to the cemetery, whose trees you see up yonder, for it is a stiff pull up this hill."

And he began:

"This young woman, Madame Paul Hamot, was the daughter of a wealthy merchant in the neighborhood, Monsieur Fontanelle. When she was a mere child of eleven, she had a terrible adventure; a footman violated her. She nearly died, in consequence, and the wretch's brutality betrayed him. A terrible criminal case was the result, and as it was proved that for three months the poor young martyr had been the victim of that brute's disgraceful practices, he was sentenced to penal servitude for life.

"The little girl grew up, stigmatized by her disgrace, isolated, without any companions, and grown-up people would scarcely kiss her, for they thought they would soil their lips if they touched her forehead. She became a sort of monster, a phenomenon to all the town. People said to each other in a whisper: 'You know little Fontanelle," and everybody turned away in the streets when she passed. Her parents could not even get a nurse to take her out for a walk, and the other servants held aloof from her, as if contact with her would poison everybody who came near her.

"It was pitiable to see the poor child when the brats played every afternoon. She remained quite by herself, standing by her maid, and looking at the other children amusing themselves. Sometimes, yielding to an irresistible desire to mix with the other children, she advanced, timidly, with nervous gestures, and mingled with a group, with furtive steps, as if conscious of her own infamy. And immediately the mothers, aunts, and nurses used to come running from every seat, taking the children intrusted to their care by the hand and dragging them brutally away.

"Little Fontanelle would remain isolated, wretched, without understanding what it meant, and then would begin to cry, heartbroken with grief, and to run and hide her head in her nurse's lap, sobbing.

"As she grew up, it was worse still. They kept the girls from her, as if she were stricken with the plague. Remember that she had nothing to learn, nothing; that she no longer had the right to the symbolical wreath of orange-flowers; that almost before she could read, she had penetrated that redoubtable mystery which mothers scarcely allow their daughters to guess, trembling as they enlighten them on the night of their marriage.

"When she went through the streets, always accompanied by a governess — as if her parents feared some fresh, terrible adventure — with her eyes cast down under the load of that mysterious disgrace which she felt was always weighing upon her, the other girls, who were not nearly so innocent as people thought, whispered and giggled as they looked at her knowingly, and immediately turned their heads absently if she happened to look at them. People scarcely greeted her; only a few men bowed to her, and the mothers pretended not to see her, while some young blackguards called her "Madame Baptiste," after the name of the footman who had outraged and ruined her.

"Nobody knew the secret torture of her mind, for she hardly ever spoke and never laughed; her parents themselves appeared uncomfortable in her presence, as if they bore her a constant grudge for some irreparable fault.

"An honest man would not willingly give his

hand to a liberated convict, would he, even if that convict were his own son? And Monsieur and Madame Fontanelle looked on their daughter as they would have done on a son who had just been released from the hulks. She was pretty and pale, tall, slender, distinguished-looking, and she would have pleased me very much, Monsieur, but for that unfortunate affair.

"Well, when a new sub-prefect was appointed here eighteen months ago, he brought his private secretary with him. He was a queer sort of fellow, who had lived in the Latin Quarter,* it appears. He saw Mademoiselle Fontanelle, and fell in love with her, and when told of what occurred, he merely said: 'Bah! That is just a guarantee for the future, and I would rather it should have happened before I married her, than afterward. I shall sleep tranquilly with that woman.'

"He paid his addresses to her, asked for her hand, and married her, and then, not being deficient in boldness, he paid wedding-calls,† as if nothing had happened. Some people returned them, others did not, but at last the affair began to be forgotten and she took her proper place in society.

"She adored her husband as if he had been a god, for you must remember that he had restored her to honor and to social life, that he had braved public opinion, faced insults, and, in a word, performed a courageous act, such as few men would accomplish, and she felt the most exalted and unceasing love for him.

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*The students' quarter in Paris, where many of them lead fast lives.

†In France and Germany, the newly-married couple pay the wedding-calls, which is the reverse of our custom.

"When she became pregnant, and it was known, the most particular people and the greatest sticklers opened their doors to her, as if she had been definitely purified by maternity.

"It is funny, but true, and thus everything was going on as well as possible, when, the other day, occurred the feast of the patron saint of our town. The prefect, surrounded by his staff and the authorities, presided at the musical competition, and when he had finished his speech, the distribution of medals began, which Paul Hamot, his private secretary, handed to those who were entitled to them.

"As you know, there are always jealousies and rivalries, which make people forget all propriety. All the ladies of the town were there on the platform, and, in his proper turn, the bandmaster from the village of Mourmillon came up. This band was only to receive a second-class medal, for you cannot give first-class medals to everybody, can you? But when the private secretary handed him his badge, the man threw it in his face and exclaimed:

"'You may keep your medal for Baptiste. You owe him a first-class one, also, just as you do me.'

"There were a number of people there who began to laugh. The common herd are neither charitable nor refined, and every eye was turned toward that poor lady. Have you ever seen a woman going mad, Monsieur? Well, we were present at the sight! She got up, and fell back on her chair three times in succession, as if she wished to make her escape, but saw that she could not make her way through the crowd. Then another voice in the crowd exclaimed:

"'Oh! Oh! Madame Baptiste!'

"And a great uproar, partly laughter and partly indignation, arose. The word was repeated over and over again; people stood on tiptoe to see the unhappy woman's face; husbands lifted their wives up in their arms so that they might see her, and people asked:

"'Which is she? The one in blue?'

"The boys crowed like cocks and laughter was heard all over the place.

"She did not move now on her state chair, just as if she had been put there for the crowd to look at. She could not move, nor disappear, nor hide her face. Her eyelids blinked quickly, as if a vivid light were shining in her face, and she panted like a horse that is going up a steep hill, so that it almost broke one's heart to see it. Meanwhile, however, Monsieur Hamot had seized the ruffian by the throat, and they were rolling on the ground together, amid a scene of indescribable confusion, and the ceremony was interrupted.

"An hour later, as the Hamots were returning home, the young woman, who had not uttered a word since the insult, but who was trembling as if all her nerves had been set in motion by springs, suddenly sprang on the parapet of the bridge, and threw herself into the river, before her husband could prevent it. The water is very deep under the arches, and it was two hours before her body was recovered. Of course, she was dead."

The narrator stopped, and then added:

"It was, perhaps, the best thing she could do in her position. There are some things which cannot be wiped out, and now you understand why the

clergy refused to have her taken into church. Ah! If it had been a religious funeral, the whole town would have been present, but you can understand that her suicide, added to the other affair, made families abstain from attending her funeral. And then, it is not an easy matter, here, to attend a funeral which is performed without religious rites."

We passed through the cemetery gates, and I waited, much moved by what I had heard, until the coffin had been lowered into the grave before I went up to the poor husband, who was sobbing violently, to press his hand vigorously. He looked at me in surprise through his tears, and said:

"Thank you, Monsieur."

I was not sorry that I had followed the funeral.

WIFE AND MISTRESS

It was not her long, silky curls, which covered her small, fairy-like head, like a golden halo, nor her beautiful complexion, nor her mouth, which was like some delicate shell, nor was it her supreme innocence, shown by her sudden blushes and by her somewhat awkward movements, nor was it her ingenuous questions which had assailed and conquered George d'Hardermes' heart. He had a peculiar temper, and any appearance of a yoke frightened him and put him to flight immediately. His unstable heart was ready to yield to any temptation, and he was incapable of any lasting attachment, while a succession of love-affairs had left no more traces on it than you find on a seashore constantly swept by the waves.

It was not the dream of a life of affection, of peace, the want of loving and of being loved, which a fast man so often feels between thirty and forty, nor the insurmountable ennui of that circle of pleasure

in which he had turned, like a horse in a circus, nor the voids in his existence which the marriage of his bachelor friends caused, and which in his selfishness he looked upon as desertion, and, nevertheless, envied, which had at last induced him to listen to the prayers and advice of his old mother and to marry Mademoiselle Suzanne de Gouvres. It was the vision that he had had when he saw her playing with quite little children, covering them with kisses, and looking at them with ecstasy in her limpid eyes, and in hearing her talk of the pleasures and the anguish that they must feel who are mothers in the fullest sense of the word—the vision of a happy home where a man feels that he is living again in others, of a house full of laughter and of song, and seemingly full of birds.

As a matter of fact, D'Hardermes loved children like some men love animals, and he was interested in them, as in some delightful spectacle, and attracted by them.

He was very gentle, kind, and thoughtful with them, invented games for them, took them on his knees, was never tired of listening to their chatter, or of watching the development of their instincts, of their intellect, and of their little, delicate souls.

He used to go and sit in the Parc Monceau, and in the squares, to watch them playing and romping and prattling round him, and one day, as a joke, somebody—a jealous mistress, or some friends in joke—had sent him a splendid nurse's cap, with long, pink ribbons.

At first, he was under the influence of the charm that springs from the beginning of an intimacy, from

the first kisses, and devoted himself altogether to that amorous education which revealed a new life to him, as it were, and enchanted him.

He thought of nothing except of increasing the ardent love that his wife bestowed on him, and lived in a state of perpetual adoration. Suzanne's feelings, the metamorphosis of that virginal heart, which was beginning to glow and vibrate with love, her passion, her modesty, her sensations, were all delicious surprises to him.

He felt the feverish pleasure of a traveler who has discovered some marvelous Eden, and loses his head over it, and, at times, with a long, affectionate, and proud look at her, which grew even warmer on looking into Suzanne's limpid, blue eyes, he would put his arms round her waist, and pressing her to him so strongly that it hurt the young woman, would exclaim:

"Oh! I am quite sure that nowhere on earth are there two people who love each other as we do, and who are as happy as you and I are, my darling!"

Months of uninterrupted possession and enchantment succeeded each other without George altering, and without any lassitude mingling with the ardor of their love, or the fire of their affection dying out.

Then, however, suddenly he ceased to be happy, and, in spite of all his efforts to hide his invincible lowness of spirits, he became another man, restless, irritated at nothing, morose, bored at everything and everywhere, whimsical, and never knowing what he wanted.

There was certainly something now poisoning that affection which had formerly been his delight,

something coming more and more between him and his wife every day, and giving him a distaste for home.

By degrees, that vague suffering assumed a definite shape in his heart, was implanted and fixed there, like a nail. He had not attained his object, and he felt the weight of chains, understood that he could never get used to such an existence, that he could not love a woman who seemed incapable of becoming a mother, who lowered herself to the part of a lawful mistress, and who was not faithful to him.

Alas! To awake from such a dream, to say to himself that he was reduced to envying the good fortune of others, that he should never cover a little, curly, smiling head with kisses, where some striking likeness, some undecided gleams of growing intellect fill a man with joy, but that he would be obliged to take the remainder of his journey in solitude, heart-broken, with nothing but old age around him; that no branch would again spring from the family tree, and that on his deathbed he would not have that last consolation of pressing in his failing arms those sobbing dear ones, for whom he had struggled and made so many sacrifices, but would be the prey of indifferent and greedy heirs, who even now were probably discounting his approaching death like some valuable security!

George had not told Suzanne the feelings which were tormenting him, and took care that she should not see his state of unhappiness. He did not worry her with trying questions that only end in some violent and distressing scene. But she was too much of a woman, and she loved her husband too much,

not to guess what was making him so gloomy, and was imperiling their love.

And every month there came a fresh disappointment, and hope was again deferred. She, however, persisted in believing that their wish would be granted; she grew ill with this painful waiting, and refused to believe that she should never be a mother.

She would have looked upon it as a humiliation either to consult a medical man or to make a pilgrimage to some shrine, like so many women do in their despair, and her proud, loyal, and loving nature at last rebelled against the cruel hostility which showed itself in the angry outbursts, the painful silence, and the haughty coldness of a man who could have done anything he liked with her by a little kindness.

With death in her soul, she had a foretaste of the way of the cross, which is the end of love, and of that bitterness, which sooner or later would end in terrible quarrels and in words which would put an impassable barrier between them.

At last, one evening, when George d'Hardermes had lost his temper, had wounded her by equivocal words and bad jokes, Suzanne, who was very pale, clutching the arms of her easy-chair convulsively, interrupted him with the accents of farewell in her melancholy voice:

"As you do not love me any more, why not tell me so at once, instead of wounding me like this by small, traitorous blows, and, above all, why continue to live together? You want your liberty, and I will give it you; you have your fortune and I have mine. Let us separate without a scandal and without a lawsuit, so that, at least, a little friendship may survive

our love. I shall leave Paris and go to live in the country with my mother. God is my witness, however, that I still love you, my poor George, as much as ever, and that I shall remain your wife, whether I am with you or separated from you!"

George hesitated for a few moments before replying. Then with an uneasy, sad look on his face, and turning away his head, he said:

"Yes, perhaps it will be best for both of us!"

They voluntarily broke their marriage contract, as she had heroically volunteered to do. She kept her resolution, exiled herself, buried herself in obscurity, accepted the trial with calm fortitude, and was as resigned as only faithful and devoted souls can be.

They wrote to each other, and she deluded herself, pursued the chimera that George would return to her, would call her back to his side, would escape from his former associates, would understand of what deep love he had voluntarily deprived himself, and would love her again as he had formerly loved her. She resisted all the entreaties and advice of her friends to cut such a false position short, and to institute a suit for divorce against her husband, as the issue would be certain.

At the end of a few months of solitude, of evanescent love affairs, when to beguile his loneliness, a man passes from the arms of one woman to those of another, George had set up a new home, and had tied himself to a woman whom he had accidentally met at a party of friends, a woman who had managed to please him and to amuse him.

His deserted wife was naturally not left in ignorance of the fact, and, stifling her jealousy and her

grief, she put on a smile, and thought that it would be the same with this one as it had been with all his other ephemeral mistresses, of whom her husband had successively got rid.

Was not that, after all, the best thing to bring about the issue which she longed and hoped for? Would not that doubtful passion, that close intimacy certainly make Monsieur d'Hardermes compare the woman he possessed with the woman he formerly had, and cause him to invoke that lost paradise and that heart full of forgiveness, of love, and of goodness, which had not forgotten him, but would respond to his first appeal?

And that confidence of hers in a happier future, which neither all the proofs of that connection in which Monsieur d'Hardermes was becoming more and more involved, with which her friends so kindly furnished her, nor the disdainful silence with which he treated all her gentle, indulgent letters could shake, had something touching, angelic in it, and reminded those who knew her well, of certain passages in the "Lives of the Saints."

At length, however, the sympathy of those who had so often tried to save the young woman, to cure her, and to open her eyes, became exhausted, and, left to herself, Suzanne proudly continued her dream, and absorbed herself in it.

Two interminable years had passed since she had lived with Monsieur d'Hardermes, and since he had put that hateful mistress in her place. She had lost all trace of them, knew nothing about him, but in spite of everything did not despair of seeing him again, and of regaining her hold over him. None

could tell when, or by what miracle, but surely before those eyes, which he had so loved, were tired of shedding tears, and that fair hair, which he had so often covered with kisses, had grown white. But the arrival of the postman every morning and evening made her start and shiver with nervousness.

One day, however, when she was going to Paris, Madame d'Hardermes found herself alone in the ladies' carriage, into which she had got in a hurry, with a peasant woman in her Sunday best, who had a child with pretty pink cheeks and rosy lips. The child was like one of the dimpled cherubs one sees on Mary's lap in pictures of the Assumption of the Virgin.

The nurse said affectionate words to the child in a coaxing voice, wrapped it up in the folds of her large cloak, sometimes gave it a noisy, hearty kiss, while it beat the air with little hands, and crowed and laughed with those pretty, attractive babyish movements, that Suzanne could not help exclaiming, "Oh! the pretty little thing!" and taking it into her arms.

At first the child was surprised at the strange face, and for a moment, seemed as if it were going to cry; but it became reassured immediately, smiled at the stranger who looked at it so kindly, inhaled the delicate scent of the iris in the bodice of her dress, with dilated nostrils, and cuddled up against her.

The two women began to talk, and, without knowing why, Madame d'Hardermes questioned the nurse, asked her where she came from, and where she was taking the little thing to.

The other, rather flattered that Suzanne admired the child and took an interest in it, replied, somewhat vainglorioously, that she lived at Bois-le-Roy, and that her husband was a wagoner.

The child had been intrusted to their care by some people in Paris, who appeared very happy, and were extremely well off. And the nurse added in a drawling voice:

"Perhaps, Madame, you know my master and mistress, Monsieur and Madame d'Hardermes?"

Suzanne started with surprise and grief, and grew as pale as if all her blood were streaming from some wound, and thinking that she had not heard correctly, with a fixed look and trembling lips, said, slowly, as if every word hurt her throat:

"You said Monsieur and Madame d'Hardermes?"

"Yes; do you know them?"

"I, yes—formerly; but it is a long time ago."

She could scarcely speak, and was as pale as death; she hardly knew what she was saying, with her eyes on this pretty child, which George must be so fond of.

She saw him, as if in a window which had suddenly been lifted up, where everything had been dark before, with their arms round each other, and radiant with happiness, with that fair head, that divine dawn, the living, smiling proof of their love, between them.

They would never leave each other; they were already almost as good as married, and were robbing her of the name which she had defended and guarded as a sacred deposit.

She would never succeed in breaking such bonds. It was a shipwreck where nothing could survive, and

where the waves did not even cast some shapeless waif and stray ashore.

And great tears rolled down her cheeks, one by one, and wetted her veil.

The train stopped at the station and the nurse scarcely liked to take the child from Suzanne, who was holding it against her heaving bosom, and kissing it as if she intended to smother it. But she said:

"I suppose the baby reminds you of one you have lost, my poor, dear lady, but the loss can be repaired at your age, surely; a second is as good as a first, and if one does not do oneself justice—"

Madame d'Hardermes gave her back the child, hurried out straight ahead of her like a hunted animal, and threw herself into the first cab that she saw.

She sued for a divorce, and obtained it.

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